

**RNA INTERFERENCE MEDIATED INHIBITION OF VASCULAR
ENDOTHELIAL GROWTH FACTOR AND VASCULAR ENDOTHELIAL
GROWTH FACTOR RECEPTOR GENE EXPRESSION USING SHORT
INTERFERING NUCLEIC ACID (siNA)**

5 This application is a continuation-in-part of McSwiggen, filed on September 23, 2003, USSN 10/670,011 which is a continuation-in-part of McSwiggen, filed on September 16, 2003, USSN 10/665,255, which is a continuation-in-part of McSwiggen, PCT/US03/05022, filed February 20, 2003, which claims the benefit of Beigelman USSN 60/358,580 filed February 20, 2002, of Beigelman USSN 60/363,124 filed March 10 11, 2002, of Beigelman USSN 60/386,782 filed June 6, 2002, of McSwiggen, USSN 60/393,796 filed July 3, 2002, of McSwiggen, USSN 60/399,348 filed July 29, 2002, of Beigelman USSN 60/406,784 filed August 29, 2002, of Beigelman USSN 60/408,378 filed September 5, 2002, of Beigelman USSN 60/409,293 filed September 9, 2002, and of Beigelman USSN 60/440,129 filed January 15, 2003, and which is a continuation-in- 15 part of Pavco, USSN 10/306,747, filed November 27, 2002, which claims the benefit of Pavco USSN 60/334,461, filed November 30, 2001, a continuation-in-part of Pavco, USSN 10/287,949 filed November 4, 2002, and a continuation-in-part of Pavco, PCT/US02/17674 filed May 29, 2002. The instant application claims priority to all of the listed applications, which are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entireties, 20 including the drawings.

Field Of The Invention

The present invention concerns compounds, compositions, and methods for the study, diagnosis, and treatment of conditions and diseases that respond to the modulation of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and/or vascular endothelial growth factor 25 receptor (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3) gene expression and/or activity. The present invention also concerns compounds, compositions, and methods relating to conditions and diseases that respond to the modulation of expression and/or activity of genes involved in VEGF and VEGF receptor pathways. Specifically, the invention relates to small nucleic acid molecules, such as short interfering nucleic acid (siNA), 30 short interfering RNA (siRNA), double-stranded RNA (dsRNA), micro-RNA (miRNA),

and short hairpin RNA (shRNA) molecules capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against VEGF and VEGF receptor gene expression.

Background Of The Invention

The following is a discussion of relevant art pertaining to RNAi. The discussion is
5 provided only for understanding of the invention that follows. The summary is not an admission that any of the work described below is prior art to the claimed invention.

RNA interference refers to the process of sequence-specific post-transcriptional gene silencing in animals mediated by short interfering RNAs (siRNAs) (Fire *et al.*, 1998, *Nature*, 391, 806; Hamilton *et al.*, 1999, *Science*, 286, 950-951). The
10 corresponding process in plants is commonly referred to as post-transcriptional gene silencing or RNA silencing and is also referred to as quelling in fungi. The process of post-transcriptional gene silencing is thought to be an evolutionarily-conserved cellular defense mechanism used to prevent the expression of foreign genes and is commonly shared by diverse flora and phyla (Fire *et al.*, 1999, *Trends Genet.*, 15, 358). Such
15 protection from foreign gene expression may have evolved in response to the production of double-stranded RNAs (dsRNAs) derived from viral infection or from the random integration of transposon elements into a host genome via a cellular response that specifically destroys homologous single-stranded RNA or viral genomic RNA. The presence of dsRNA in cells triggers the RNAi response though a mechanism that has yet
20 to be fully characterized. This mechanism appears to be different from the interferon response that results from dsRNA-mediated activation of protein kinase PKR and 2',5'-oligoadenylate synthetase resulting in non-specific cleavage of mRNA by ribonuclease L.

The presence of long dsRNAs in cells stimulates the activity of a ribonuclease III
25 enzyme referred to as dicer. Dicer is involved in the processing of the dsRNA into short pieces of dsRNA known as short interfering RNAs (siRNAs) (Hamilton *et al.*, *supra*; Bernstein *et al.*, 2001, *Nature*, 409, 363). Short interfering RNAs derived from dicer activity are typically about 21 to about 23 nucleotides in length and comprise about 19 base pair duplexes (Hamilton *et al.*, *supra*; Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Genes Dev.*, 15, 188).
30 Dicer has also been implicated in the excision of 21- and 22-nucleotide small temporal RNAs (stRNAs) from precursor RNA of conserved structure that are implicated in

translational control (Hutvagner *et al.*, 2001, *Science*, 293, 834). The RNAi response also features an endonuclease complex, commonly referred to as an RNA-induced silencing complex (RISC), which mediates cleavage of single-stranded RNA having sequence complementary to the antisense strand of the siRNA duplex. Cleavage of the target RNA takes place in the middle of the region complementary to the antisense strand of the siRNA duplex (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Genes Dev.*, 15, 188).

RNAi has been studied in a variety of systems. Fire *et al.*, 1998, *Nature*, 391, 806, were the first to observe RNAi in *C. elegans*. Bahramian and Zarbl, 1999, *Molecular and Cellular Biology*, 19, 274-283 and Wianny and Goetz, 1999, *Nature Cell Biol.*, 2, 70, describe RNAi mediated by dsRNA in mammalian systems. Hammond *et al.*, 2000, *Nature*, 404, 293, describe RNAi in *Drosophila* cells transfected with dsRNA. Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Nature*, 411, 494, describe RNAi induced by introduction of duplexes of synthetic 21-nucleotide RNAs in cultured mammalian cells including human embryonic kidney and HeLa cells. Recent work in *Drosophila* embryonic lysates (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *EMBO J.*, 20, 6877) has revealed certain requirements for siRNA length, structure, chemical composition, and sequence that are essential to mediate efficient RNAi activity. These studies have shown that 21-nucleotide siRNA duplexes are most active when containing 3'-terminal dinucleotide overhangs. Furthermore, complete substitution of one or both siRNA strands with 2'-deoxy (2'-H) or 2'-O-methyl nucleotides abolishes RNAi activity, whereas substitution of the 3'-terminal siRNA overhang nucleotides with 2'-deoxy nucleotides (2'-H) was shown to be tolerated. Single mismatch sequences in the center of the siRNA duplex were also shown to abolish RNAi activity. In addition, these studies also indicate that the position of the cleavage site in the target RNA is defined by the 5'-end of the siRNA guide sequence rather than the 3'-end of the guide sequence (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *EMBO J.*, 20, 6877). Other studies have indicated that a 5'-phosphate on the target-complementary strand of a siRNA duplex is required for siRNA activity and that ATP is utilized to maintain the 5'-phosphate moiety on the siRNA (Nykanen *et al.*, 2001, *Cell*, 107, 309).

Studies have shown that replacing the 3'-terminal nucleotide overhanging segments of a 21-mer siRNA duplex having two nucleotide 3'-overhangs with deoxyribonucleotides does not have an adverse effect on RNAi activity. Replacing up to four nucleotides on each end of the siRNA with deoxyribonucleotides has been reported

to be well tolerated, whereas complete substitution with deoxyribonucleotides results in no RNAi activity (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *EMBO J.*, 20, 6877). In addition, Elbashir *et al.*, *supra*, also report that substitution of siRNA with 2'-O-methyl nucleotides completely abolishes RNAi activity. Li *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/44914, and
5 Beach *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/68836 preliminarily suggest that siRNA may include modifications to either the phosphate-sugar backbone or the nucleoside to include at least one of a nitrogen or sulfur heteroatom, however, neither application postulates to what extent such modifications would be tolerated in siRNA molecules, nor provides any further guidance or examples of such modified siRNA.
10 Kreutzer *et al.*, Canadian Patent Application No. 2,359,180, also describe certain chemical modifications for use in dsRNA constructs in order to counteract activation of double-stranded RNA-dependent protein kinase PKR, specifically 2'-amino or 2'-O-methyl nucleotides, and nucleotides containing a 2'-O or 4'-C methylene bridge. However, Kreutzer *et al.* similarly fails to provide examples or guidance as to what
15 extent these modifications would be tolerated in siRNA molecules.

Parrish *et al.*, 2000, *Molecular Cell*, 6, 1977-1087, tested certain chemical modifications targeting the unc-22 gene in *C. elegans* using long (>25 nt) siRNA transcripts. The authors describe the introduction of thiophosphate residues into these siRNA transcripts by incorporating thiophosphate nucleotide analogs with T7 and T3
20 RNA polymerase and observed that RNAs with two phosphorothioate modified bases also had substantial decreases in effectiveness as RNAi. Further, Parrish *et al.* reported that phosphorothioate modification of more than two residues greatly destabilized the RNAs *in vitro* such that interference activities could not be assayed. *Id.* at 1081. The authors also tested certain modifications at the 2'-position of the nucleotide sugar in the
25 long siRNA transcripts and found that substituting deoxynucleotides for ribonucleotides produced a substantial decrease in interference activity, especially in the case of Uridine to Thymidine and/or Cytidine to deoxy-Cytidine substitutions. *Id.* In addition, the authors tested certain base modifications, including substituting, in sense and antisense strands of the siRNA, 4-thiouracil, 5-bromouracil, 5-iodouracil, and 3-(aminoallyl)uracil
30 for uracil, and inosine for guanosine. Whereas 4-thiouracil and 5-bromouracil substitution appeared to be tolerated, Parrish reported that inosine produced a substantial decrease in interference activity when incorporated in either strand. Parrish also reported

that incorporation of 5-iodouracil and 3-(aminoallyl)uracil in the antisense strand resulted in a substantial decrease in RNAi activity as well.

The use of longer dsRNA has been described. For example, Beach *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/68836, describes specific methods for attenuating gene expression using endogenously-derived dsRNA. Tuschl *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/75164, describe a *Drosophila* *in vitro* RNAi system and the use of specific siRNA molecules for certain functional genomic and certain therapeutic applications; although Tuschl, 2001, *Chem. Biochem.*, 2, 239-245, doubts that RNAi can be used to cure genetic diseases or viral infection due to the danger of activating interferon response. Li *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/44914, describe the use of specific dsRNAs for attenuating the expression of certain target genes. Zernicka-Goetz *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/36646, describe certain methods for inhibiting the expression of particular genes in mammalian cells using certain dsRNA molecules. Fire *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/32619, describe particular methods for introducing certain dsRNA molecules into cells for use in inhibiting gene expression. Plaetinck *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/01846, describe certain methods for identifying specific genes responsible for conferring a particular phenotype in a cell using specific dsRNA molecules. Mello *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/29058, describe the identification of specific genes involved in dsRNA-mediated RNAi. Deschamps Depaillette *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/07409, describe specific compositions consisting of particular dsRNA molecules combined with certain anti-viral agents. Waterhouse *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. 99/53050, describe certain methods for decreasing the phenotypic expression of a nucleic acid in plant cells using certain dsRNAs. Driscoll *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/49844, describe specific DNA constructs for use in facilitating gene silencing in targeted organisms.

Others have reported on various RNAi and gene-silencing systems. For example, Parrish *et al.*, 2000, *Molecular Cell*, 6, 1977-1087, describe specific chemically-modified 30 siRNA constructs targeting the unc-22 gene of *C. elegans*. Grossniklaus, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/38551, describes certain methods for regulating polycomb gene expression in plants using certain dsRNAs. Churikov *et al.*, International PCT

Publication No. WO 01/42443, describe certain methods for modifying genetic characteristics of an organism using certain dsRNAs. Cogoni *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/53475, describe certain methods for isolating a Neurospora silencing gene and uses thereof. Reed *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/68836, describe certain methods for gene silencing in plants. Honer *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/70944, describe certain methods of drug screening using transgenic nematodes as Parkinson's Disease models using certain dsRNAs. Deak *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/72774, describe certain *Drosophila*-derived gene products that may be related to RNAi in *Drosophila*. Arndt *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/92513 describe certain methods for mediating gene suppression by using factors that enhance RNAi. Tuschl *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 02/44321, describe certain synthetic siRNA constructs. Pachuk *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/63364, and Satishchandran *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/04313, describe certain 10 methods and compositions for inhibiting the function of certain polynucleotide sequences using certain dsRNAs. Echeverri *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 02/38805, describe certain *C. elegans* genes identified via RNAi. Kreutzer *et al.*, International PCT Publications Nos. WO 02/055692, WO 02/055693, and EP 1144623 15 B1 describes certain methods for inhibiting gene expression using RNAi. Graham *et al.*, International PCT Publications Nos. WO 99/49029 and WO 01/70949, and AU 4037501 describe certain vector expressed siRNA molecules. Fire *et al.*, US 6,506,559, describe certain methods for inhibiting gene expression in vitro using certain long dsRNA (greater than 25 nucleotide) constructs that mediate RNAi. Harborth *et al.*, 2003, Antisense & Nucleic Acid Drug Development, 13, 83-105, describe certain chemically and 20 structurally modified siRNA molecules. Chiu and Rana, 2003, RNA, 9, 1034-1048, describe certain chemically and structurally modified siRNA molecules. Filleur *et al.*, 2003, *Cancer Research*, 63, 3919-3922, describe certain siRNA molecules targeting VEGF. Reich *et al.*, 2003, *Molecular Vision*, 9, 210-216, describe certain short 25 interfering RNAs targeting VEGF in a mouse model of neovascularization.

This invention relates to compounds, compositions, and methods useful for modulating the expression of genes, such as those genes associated with angiogenesis

and proliferation, using short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecules. This invention also relates to compounds, compositions, and methods useful for modulating the expression and activity of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and/or vascular endothelial growth factor receptor (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, VEGFr3) genes, or genes involved in VEGF and/or VEGFr pathways of gene expression and/or VEGF activity by RNA interference (RNAi) using small nucleic acid molecules. In particular, the instant invention features small nucleic acid molecules, such as short interfering nucleic acid (siNA), short interfering RNA (siRNA), double-stranded RNA (dsRNA), micro-RNA (miRNA), and short hairpin RNA (shRNA) molecules and methods used to modulate the expression of VEGF and/or VEGFr genes. A siNA of the invention can be unmodified or chemically-modified. A siNA of the instant invention can be chemically synthesized, expressed from a vector or enzymatically synthesized. The instant invention also features various chemically-modified synthetic short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecules capable of modulating VEGF and/or VEGFr gene expression or activity in cells by RNA interference (RNAi). The use of chemically-modified siNA improves various properties of native siNA molecules through increased resistance to nuclease degradation *in vivo* and/or through improved cellular uptake. Further, contrary to earlier published studies, siNA having multiple chemical modifications retains its RNAi activity. The siNA molecules of the instant invention provide useful reagents and methods for a variety of therapeutic, diagnostic, target validation, genomic discovery, genetic engineering, and pharmacogenomic applications.

In one embodiment, the invention features one or more siNA molecules and methods that independently or in combination modulate the expression of gene(s) encoding proteins, such as vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and/or vascular endothelial growth factor receptors (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, VEGFr3), associated with the maintenance and/or development of cancer and other proliferative diseases, such as genes encoding sequences comprising those sequences referred to by GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**, referred to herein generally as VEGF and/or VEGFr. The description below of the various aspects and embodiments of the invention is provided with reference to the exemplary VEGF and VEGFr (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, VEGFr3) genes referred to herein as VEGF and VEGFr respectively. However, the various aspects and embodiments are also directed to other VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, such as mutant VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, splice variants of VEGF and/or VEGFr

genes, other VEGF and/or VEGFr ligands and receptors. The various aspects and embodiments are also directed to other genes that are involved in VEGF and/or VEGFr mediated pathways of signal transduction or gene expression that are involved in the progression, development, and/or maintenance of disease (e.g., cancer). These additional 5 genes can be analyzed for target sites using the methods described for VEGF and/or VEGFr genes herein. Thus, the modulation of other genes and the effects of such modulation of the other genes can be performed, determined, and measured as described herein.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 10 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a vascular endothelial growth factor (e.g., VEGF, VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, VEGF-D) gene, wherein said siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 21 base pairs.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 15 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a vascular endothelial growth factor receptor (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3) gene, wherein said siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 21 base pairs.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF gene, for example, wherein the VEGF gene comprises VEGF encoding sequence.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGFr gene, for example, wherein the VEGFr gene comprises VEGFr encoding sequence.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having RNAi activity 25 against VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA, wherein the siNA molecule comprises a sequence complementary to any RNA having VEGF and/or VEGFr encoding sequence, such as those sequences having GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**. In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having RNAi activity against VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA, wherein the siNA molecule comprises a sequence complementary to an RNA having other VEGF and/or VEGFr encoding sequence, for 30 example mutant VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, splice variants of VEGF and/or VEGFr

genes, variants of VEGF and/or VEGFr genes with conservative substitutions, and homologous VEGF and/or VEGFr ligands and receptors, such as those sequences having GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**. Chemical modifications as shown in **Tables III and IV** or otherwise described herein can be applied to any siNA construct of
5 the invention.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having RNAi activity against VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA, wherein the siNA molecule comprises a sequence complementary to any RNA having VEGF and/or VEGFr encoding sequence, such as those sequences having VEGF and/or VEGFr GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table 10 I**. In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having RNAi activity against VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA, wherein the siNA molecule comprises a sequence complementary to an RNA having other VEGF and/or VEGFr encoding sequence, for example, mutant VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, splice variants of VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, VEGF and/or VEGFr variants with conservative substitutions, and homologous
15 VEGF and/or VEGFr ligands and receptors. Chemical modifications as shown in **Tables III and IV** or otherwise described herein can be applied to any siNA construct of the invention.

In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having RNAi activity against a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein the siNA molecule comprises
20 nucleotide sequence complementary to nucleotide sequence of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, such as those VEGF and/or VEGFr sequences having GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I** or other VEGF and/or VEGFr encoding sequence, such as mutant VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, splice variants of VEGF and/or VEGFr genes, variants with conservative substitutions, and homologous VEGF and/or VEGFr ligands and receptors.
25 In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention includes nucleotide sequence that can interact with nucleotide sequence of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene and thereby mediate silencing of VEGF and/or VEGFr gene expression, for example, wherein the siNA mediates regulation of VEGF and/or VEGFr gene expression by cellular processes that modulate the chromatin structure of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene and prevent
30 transcription of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene.

In one embodiment, siNA molecules of the invention are used to down regulate or inhibit the expression of soluble VEGF receptors (e.g. sVEGFr1 or sVEGFr2). Analysis of soluble VEGF receptor levels can be used to identify subjects with certain cancer types. These cancers can be amenable to treatment, for example, treatment with siNA
5 molecules of the invention and any other chemotherapeutic composition. As such, analysis of soluble VEGF receptor levels can be used to determine treatment type and the course of therapy in treating a subject. Monitoring of soluble VEGF receptor levels can be used to predict treatment outcome and to determine the efficacy of compounds and compositions that modulate the level and/or activity of VEGF receptors (see for example
10 Pavco USSN 10/438,493, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety including the drawings).

In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule comprising nucleotide sequence, for example, nucleotide sequence in the antisense region of the siNA molecule that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence or portion of sequence of
15 a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene. In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule comprising a region, for example, the antisense region of the siNA construct, complementary to a sequence comprising a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene sequence or a portion thereof.

In one embodiment, the antisense region of VEGF siNA constructs can comprise a
20 sequence complementary to sequence having any of SEQ ID NOs. 1-96, 193-232, or 385-409. In one embodiment, the antisense region can also comprise sequence having any of SEQ ID NOs. 97-192, 237-240, 245-248, 253-256, 261-264, 269-272, 291-308,
15 327-344, 350-354, 360-364, 411, 416-419, 424-427, 445, 447, 449, 466, 468, 470, or 473. In another embodiment, the sense region of the VEGF constructs can comprise
25 sequence having any of SEQ ID NOs. 1-96, 193-232, 233-236, 241-244, 249-252, 257-
260, 265-268, 273-290, 309-326, 345-349, 355-359, 385-409, 412-415, 420-423, 446,
448, 465, 467, 469, 471, or 472. The sense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID
NO. 456 and the antisense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 457. The
sense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 458 and the antisense region can
30 comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 459. The sense region can comprise a sequence of
SEQ ID NO. 460 and the antisense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 461.
The sense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 462 and the antisense region

can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 459. The sense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 463 and the antisense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 459. The sense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 462 and the antisense region can comprise a sequence of SEQ ID NO. 464.

5 In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises any of SEQ ID NOS. 1-473. The sequences shown in SEQ ID NOS: 1-473 are not limiting. A siNA molecule of the invention can comprise any contiguous VEGF and/or VEGFr sequence (e.g., about 19 to about 25, or about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 or 25 contiguous VEGF and/or VEGFr nucleotides).

10 In yet another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule comprising a sequence, for example, the antisense sequence of the siNA construct, complementary to a sequence or portion of sequence comprising sequence represented by GenBank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**. Chemical modifications in **Tables III and IV** and described herein can be applied to any siRNA construct of the invention.

15 In one embodiment of the invention a siNA molecule comprises an antisense strand having about 19 to about 29 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, or 29) nucleotides, wherein the antisense strand is complementary to a RNA sequence encoding a VEGF and/or VEGFr protein, and wherein said siNA further comprises a sense strand having about 19 to about 29 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 or 29) nucleotides, and wherein said sense strand and said antisense strand are distinct nucleotide sequences with at least about 19 complementary nucleotides.

20 In another embodiment of the invention a siNA molecule of the invention comprises an antisense region having about 19 to about 29 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 or 29) nucleotides, wherein the antisense region is complementary to a RNA sequence encoding a VEGF and/or VEGFr protein, and wherein said siNA further comprises a sense region having about 19 to about 29 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 or more) nucleotides, wherein said sense region and said antisense region comprise a linear molecule with at least about 19 complementary nucleotides.

25 In one embodiment of the invention a siNA molecule comprises an antisense strand comprising a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence

or a portion thereof encoding a VEGF and/or VEGFr protein. The siNA further comprises a sense strand, wherein said sense strand comprises a nucleotide sequence of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule comprises an antisense region
5 comprising a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence encoding a VEGF and/or VEGFr protein or a portion thereof. The siNA molecule further comprises a sense region, wherein said sense region comprises a nucleotide sequence of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention has RNAi activity that
10 modulates expression of RNA encoded by a VEGFr gene. Because VEGFr genes can share some degree of sequence homology with each other, siNA molecules can be designed to target a class of VEGFr genes (and associated receptor or ligand genes) or alternately specific VEGFr genes by selecting sequences that are either shared amongst different VEGFr targets or alternatively that are unique for a specific VEGFr target.
15 Therefore, in one embodiment, the siNA molecule can be designed to target conserved regions of VEGFr RNA sequence having homology between several VEGFr genes so as to target several VEGFr genes (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3, different VEGFr isoforms, splice variants, mutant genes etc.) with one siNA molecule. In one embodiment, the siNA molecule can be designed to target conserved regions of VEGFr1,
20 VEGFr2, and VEGFr3 RNA sequence having shared sequence homology (see for example **Table III**). Accordingly, in one embodiment, the siNA molecule of the invention modulates the expression of more than one VEGFr gene, i.e., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and VEGFr3, or any combination thereof. In another embodiment, the siNA molecule can be designed to target a sequence that is unique to a specific VEGFr RNA
25 sequence due to the high degree of specificity that the siNA molecule requires to mediate RNAi activity

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention has RNAi activity that modulates expression of RNA encoded by a VEGF gene. Because VEGF genes can share some degree of sequence homology with each other, siNA molecules can be
30 designed to target a class of VEGF genes (and associated receptor or ligand genes) or alternately specific VEGF genes by selecting sequences that are either shared amongst

different VEGF targets or alternatively that are unique for a specific VEGF target. Therefore, in one embodiment, the siNA molecule can be designed to target conserved regions of VEGF RNA sequence having homology between several VEGF genes so as to target several VEGF genes (e.g., VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VEGF-C and/or VEGF-D, 5 different VEGF isoforms, splice variants, mutant genes etc.) with one siNA molecule. Accordingly, in one embodiment, the siNA molecule of the invention modulates the expression of more than one VEGF gene, i.e., VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VRGF-C, and VEGF-D or any combination thereof. In another embodiment, the siNA molecule can be designed to target a sequence that is unique to a specific VEGF RNA sequence due to the 10 high degree of specificity that the siNA molecule requires to mediate RNAi activity.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is designed to target a conserved sequence that shares homology between VEGF and VEGFr1 (see for example sequences shown in Table III having homology between VEGF and VEGFr1) such that levels of VEGF and VEGFr1 are both modulated or down regulated with the same siNA 15 molecule. In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is designed to target a conserved sequence that shares homology between VEGF and VEGFr2 (see for example sequences shown in Table III having homology between VEGF and VEGFr2) such that levels of VEGF and VEGFr2 are both modulated or down regulated with the same siNA molecule.

20 In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention targeting one or more VEGF receptor genes (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3) is used in combination with a siNA molecule of the invention targeting a VEGF gene (e.g., VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VEGF-C and/or VEGF-D) according to a use described herein. For example, the combination of siNA molecules can be used to treat a subject with an angiogenesis or 25 neovascularization related disease, such as tumor angiogenesis and cancer, including but not limited to breast cancer, lung cancer (including non-small cell lung carcinoma), prostate cancer, colorectal cancer, brain cancer, esophageal cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, cervical cancer, head and neck cancer, skin cancers, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, liposarcoma, epithelial carcinoma, renal cell carcinoma, gallbladder adeno 30 carcinoma, parotid adenocarcinoma, ovarian cancer, melanoma, lymphoma, glioma, endometrial sarcoma, multidrug resistant cancers, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, neovascular glaucoma, myopic degeneration, arthritis, psoriasis,

endometriosis, female reproduction, verruca vulgaris, angiofibroma of tuberous sclerosis, pot-wine stains, Sturge Weber syndrome, Kippel-Trenaunay-Weber syndrome, Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome, renal disease such as Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD), and any other diseases or conditions that are related to or will respond
5 to the levels of VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and VEGFr3 in a cell or tissue, alone or in combination with other therapies..

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention that targets homologous VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 sequence is used in combinaiton with a siNA molecule that targets VEGF-A according to a use described herein. For example, the combination of siNA
10 molecules can be used to treat a subject with an angiogenesis or neovascularization related disease such as tumor angiogenesis and cancer, including but not limited to breast cancer, lung cancer (including non-small cell lung carcinoma), prostate cancer, colorectal cancer, brain cancer, esophageal cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, cervical cancer, head and neck cancer, skin cancers, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, liposarcoma,
15 epithelial carcinoma, renal cell carcinoma, gallbladder adeno carcinoma, parotid adenocarcinoma, ovarian cancer, melanoma, lymphoma, glioma, endometrial sarcoma, multidrug resistant cancers, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, neovascular glaucoma, myopic degeneration, arthritis, psoriasis, endometriosis, female reproduction, verruca vulgaris, angiofibroma of tuberous sclerosis, pot-wine stains, Sturge Weber
20 syndrome, Kippel-Trenaunay-Weber syndrome, Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome, renal disease such as Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD), and any other diseases or conditions that are related to or will respond to the levels of VEGF, VEGFr1, and VEGFr2 in a cell or tissue, alone or in combination with other therapies.

In one embodiment, a siNA of the invention is used to inhibit the expression of
25 VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3 genes, wherein the VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3 sequences share sequence homology. Such homologous sequences can be identified as is known in the art, for example using sequence alignments. siNA molecules can be designed to target such homologous sequences, for example using perfectly complementary sequences or by incorporating mismatches and/or wobble base
30 pairs that can provide additional target sequences One advantage of using siNAs of the invention is that a single siNA can be designed to include nucleic acid sequence that is complementary to the nucleotide sequence that is conserved between the VEGF

receptors (i.e., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3) such that the siNA can interact with RNAs of the receptors and mediate RNAi to achieve inhibition of expression of the VEGF receptors. In this approach, a single siNA can be used to inhibit expression of more than one VEGF receptor instead of using more than one siNA molecule to target
5 the different receptors.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of designing a single siNA to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 genes comprising designing an siNA having nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence encoded by or present in both VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 genes or a portion thereof, wherein the siNA
10 mediates RNAi to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 genes. For example, a single siNA can inhibit the expression of two genes by binding to conserved or homologous sequence present in RNA encoded by VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 genes or a portion thereof.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of designing a single siNA to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr1 and VEGFr3 genes comprising designing an siNA having nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence encoded by or present in both VEGFr1 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof, wherein the siNA mediates RNAi to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr1 and VEGFr3 genes. For example, a single siNA can inhibit the expression of two genes by binding to conserved or homologous sequence present in RNA encoded by VEGFr1 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof.
20

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of designing a single siNA to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes comprising designing an siNA having nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence encoded by or present in both VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof, wherein the siNA mediates RNAi to inhibit the expression of both VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes. For example, a single siNA can inhibit the expression of two genes by binding to conserved or homologous sequence present in RNA encoded by VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof.
25

30 In one embodiment, the invention features a method of designing a single siNA to inhibit the expression of VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes comprising designing an

siNA having nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence encoded by or present in VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof, wherein the siNA mediates RNAi to inhibit the expression of VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes. For example, a single siNA can inhibit the expression of multiple genes by binding to 5 conserved or homologous sequence present in RNA encoded by VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and VEGFr3 genes or a portion thereof.

In one embodiment, nucleic acid molecules of the invention that act as mediators of the RNA interference gene silencing response are double-stranded nucleic acid molecules. In another embodiment, the siNA molecules of the invention consist of 10 duplexes containing about 19 base pairs between oligonucleotides comprising about 19 to about 25 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 or 25) nucleotides. In yet another embodiment, siNA molecules of the invention comprise duplexes with overhanging ends of about about 1 to about 3 (e.g., about 1, 2, or 3) nucleotides, for example, about 21-nucleotide duplexes with about 19 base pairs and 3'-terminal mononucleotide, 15 dinucleotide, or trinucleotide overhangs.

In one embodiment, the invention features one or more chemically-modified siNA constructs having specificity for VEGF and/or VEGFr expressing nucleic acid molecules, such as RNA encoding a VEGF and/or VEGFr protein. Non-limiting examples of such chemical modifications include without limitation phosphorothioate 20 internucleotide linkages, 2'-deoxyribonucleotides, 2'-O-methyl ribonucleotides, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro ribonucleotides, "universal base" nucleotides, "acyclic" nucleotides, 5-C-methyl nucleotides, and terminal glyceryl and/or inverted deoxy abasic residue incorporation. These chemical modifications, when used in various siNA constructs, are shown to 25 preserve RNAi activity in cells while at the same time, dramatically increasing the serum stability of these compounds. Furthermore, contrary to the data published by Parrish *et al.*, *supra*, applicant demonstrates that multiple (greater than one) phosphorothioate substitutions are well-tolerated and confer substantial increases in serum stability for modified siNA constructs.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises modified 30 nucleotides while maintaining the ability to mediate RNAi. The modified nucleotides can be used to improve *in vitro* or *in vivo* characteristics such as stability, activity, and/or

bioavailability. For example, a siNA molecule of the invention can comprise modified nucleotides as a percentage of the total number of nucleotides present in the siNA molecule. As such, a siNA molecule of the invention can generally comprise about 5% to about 100% modified nucleotides (e.g., 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%, 30%, 35%, 40%,
5 45%, 50%, 55%, 60%, 65%, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95% or 100% modified
nucleotides). The actual percentage of modified nucleotides present in a given siNA
molecule will depend on the total number of nucleotides present in the siNA. If the siNA
molecule is single stranded, the percent modification can be based upon the total number
10 of nucleotides present in the single stranded siNA molecules. Likewise, if the siNA
molecule is double stranded, the percent modification can be based upon the total
number of nucleotides present in the sense strand, antisense strand, or both the sense and
antisense strands.

One aspect of the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic
acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene. In
15 one embodiment, a double stranded siNA molecule comprises one or more chemical
modifications and each strand of the double-stranded siNA is about 21 nucleotides long.
In one embodiment, the double-stranded siNA molecule does not contain any
ribonucleotides. In another embodiment, the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises
one or more ribonucleotides. In one embodiment, each strand of the double-stranded
20 siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 23 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,
27, 28, or 29) nucleotides, wherein each strand comprises about 19 nucleotides that are
complementary to the nucleotides of the other strand. In one embodiment, one of the
strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence that is
complementary to a nucleotide sequence or a portion thereof of the VEGF and/or VEGFr
25 gene, and the second strand of the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a
nucleotide sequence substantially similar to the nucleotide sequence of the VEGF and/or
VEGFr gene or a portion thereof.

In another embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering
nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr
30 gene comprising an antisense region, wherein the antisense region comprises a
nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the VEGF and/or
VEGFr gene or a portion thereof, and a sense region, wherein the sense region comprises

a nucleotide sequence substantially similar to the nucleotide sequence of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof. In one embodiment, the antisense region and the sense region each comprise about 19 to about 23 (e.g. about 19, 20, 21, 22, or 23) nucleotides, wherein the antisense region comprises about 19 nucleotides that are 5 complementary to nucleotides of the sense region.

In another embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene comprising a sense region and an antisense region, wherein the antisense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of RNA 10 encoded by the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof and the sense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to the antisense region.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises blunt ends, i.e., ends that do not include any overhanging nucleotides. For example, a siNA molecule of 15 the invention comprising modifications described herein (e.g., comprising nucleotides having Formulae I-VII or siNA constructs comprising Stab1-Stab22 or any combination thereof) and/or any length described herein can comprise blunt ends or ends with no overhanging nucleotides.

In one embodiment, any siNA molecule of the invention can comprise one or more blunt ends, i.e. where a blunt end does not have any overhanging nucleotides. In a non- 20 limiting example, a blunt ended siNA molecule has a number of base pairs equal to the number of nucleotides present in each strand of the siNA molecule. In another example, a siNA molecule comprises one blunt end, for example wherein the 5'-end of the antisense strand and the 3'-end of the sense strand do not have any overhanging nucleotides. In another example, a siNA molecule comprises one blunt end, for example 25 wherein the 3'-end of the antisense strand and the 5'-end of the sense strand do not have any overhanging nucleotides. In another example, a siNA molecule comprises two blunt ends, for example wherein the 3'-end of the antisense strand and the 5'-end of the sense strand as well as the 5'-end of the antisense strand and 3'-end of the sense strand do not have any overhanging nucleotides. A blunt ended siNA molecule can comprise, for 30 example, from about 18 to about 30 nucleotides (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30 nucleotides). Other nucleotides present in a blunt ended siNA

molecule can comprise mismatches, bulges, loops, or wobble base pairs, for example, to modulate the activity of the siNA molecule to mediate RNA interference.

By “blunt ends” is meant symmetric termini or termini of a double stranded siNA molecule having no overhanging nucleotides. The two strands of a double stranded 5 siNA molecule align with each other without over-hanging nucleotides at the termini. For example, a blunt ended siNA construct comprises terminal nucleotides that are complementary between the sense and antisense regions of the siNA molecule.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 10 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein the siNA molecule is assembled from two separate oligonucleotide fragments wherein one fragment comprises the sense region and the second fragment comprises the antisense region of the siNA molecule. The sense region can be connected 15 to the antisense region via a linker molecule, such as a polynucleotide linker or a non-nucleotide linker.

15 In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene comprising a sense region and an antisense region, wherein the antisense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of RNA encoded by the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof and the sense region 20 comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to the antisense region, and wherein the siNA molecule has one or more modified pyrimidine and/or purine nucleotides. In one embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl pyrimidine nucleotides or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides. In 25 another embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides. In one embodiment, the 30 pyrimidine nucleotides in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl or

2'-deoxy purine nucleotides. In another embodiment of any of the above-described siNA molecules, any nucleotides present in a non-complementary region of the sense strand (e.g. overhang region) are 2'-deoxy nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 5 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein the siNA molecule is assembled from two separate oligonucleotide fragments wherein one fragment comprises the sense region and the second fragment comprises the antisense region of the siNA molecule, and wherein the fragment comprising the sense region includes a terminal cap moiety at the 5'-end, the 3'-end, or 10 both of the 5' and 3' ends of the fragment. In another embodiment, the terminal cap moiety is an inverted deoxy abasic moiety or glyceryl moiety. In another embodiment, each of the two fragments of the siNA molecule comprise about 21 nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule comprising at least one modified nucleotide, wherein the modified nucleotide is a 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotide. 15 The siNA can be, for example, of length between about 12 and about 36 nucleotides. In another embodiment, all pyrimidine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the modified nucleotides in the siNA include at least one 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro cytidine or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotide. In another embodiment, the modified nucleotides in the siNA include at least 20 one 2'-fluoro cytidine and at least one 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all uridine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all cytidine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro cytidine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all adenosine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro adenosine nucleotides. In another 25 embodiment, all guanosine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro guanosine nucleotides. The siNA can further comprise at least one modified internucleotidic linkage, such as phosphorothioate linkage. In another embodiment, the 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoronucleotides are present at specifically selected locations in the siNA that are sensitive to cleavage by ribonucleases, such as locations having pyrimidine 30 nucleotides. In another embodiment, the siNA comprises a sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence in a separate RNA, such as a VEGF or VEGFr RNA.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of increasing the stability of a siNA molecule against cleavage by ribonucleases comprising introducing at least one modified nucleotide into the siNA molecule, wherein the modified nucleotide is a 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotide. In another embodiment, all pyrimidine nucleotides present 5 in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the modified nucleotides in the siNA include at least one 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro cytidine or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotide. In another embodiment, the modified nucleotides in the siNA include at least one 2'-fluoro cytidine and at least one 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all uridine nucleotides present in the siNA 10 are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro uridine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all cytidine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro cytidine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all adenosine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro adenosine nucleotides. In another embodiment, all guanosine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro guanosine nucleotides. The siNA can further comprise at 15 least one modified internucleotidic linkage, such as phosphorothioate linkage. In another embodiment, the 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoronucleotides are present at specifically selected locations in the siNA that are sensitive to cleavage by ribonucleases, such as locations having pyrimidine nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 20 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene comprising a sense region and an antisense region, wherein the antisense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of RNA encoded by the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene or a portion thereof and the sense region comprises a nucleotide sequence that is complementary to the antisense region, and 25 wherein the purine nucleotides present in the antisense region comprise 2'-deoxy-purine nucleotides. In an alternative embodiment, the purine nucleotides present in the antisense region comprise 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides. In either of the above embodiments, the antisense region can comprise a phosphorothioate internucleotide linkage at the 3' end of the antisense region. Alternatively, in either of the above 30 embodiments, the antisense region can comprise a glyceryl modification at the 3' end of the antisense region. In another embodiment of any of the above-described siNA molecules, any nucleotides present in a non-complementary region of the antisense strand (e.g. overhang region) are 2'-deoxy nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that down-regulates expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein the siNA molecule is assembled from two separate oligonucleotide fragments wherein one fragment comprises the sense region and the second fragment
5 comprises the antisense region of the siNA molecule. In another embodiment about 19 nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule and wherein at least two 3' terminal nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are not base-paired to the nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule. In one embodiment, each of the
10 two 3' terminal nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule is a 2'-deoxy-pyrimidine nucleotide, such as a 2'-deoxy-thymidine. In another embodiment, all 21 nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other fragment of the siNA molecule. In another embodiment, about
15 19 nucleotides of the antisense region are base-paired to the nucleotide sequence or a portion thereof of the RNA encoded by the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene. In another embodiment, about 21 nucleotides of the antisense region are base-paired to the nucleotide sequence or a portion thereof of the RNA encoded by the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene. In any of the above embodiments, the 5'-end of the fragment comprising said antisense region can optionally include a phosphate group.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA sequence (e.g., wherein said target RNA sequence is encoded by a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene involved in the VEGF and/or VEGFr pathway), wherein the siNA molecule does not contain any ribonucleotides and wherein each strand of the double-stranded siNA
25 molecule is about 21 nucleotides long. Examples of non-ribonucleotide containing siNA constructs are combinations of stabilization chemistries shown in Table IV in any combination of Sense/Antisense chemistries, such as Stab 7/8, Stab 7/11, Stab 8/8, Stab 18/8, Stab 18/11, Stab 12/13, Stab 7/13, Stab 18/13, Stab 7/19, Stab 8/19, Stab 18/19, Stab 7/20, Stab 8/20, or Stab 18/20.

30 In one embodiment, the invention features a medicament comprising a siNA molecule of the invention.

In one embodiment, the invention features an active ingredient comprising a siNA molecule of the invention.

In one embodiment, the invention features the use of a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule to down-regulate expression of a VEGF and/or
5 VEGFr gene, wherein the siNA molecule comprises one or more chemical modifications and each strand of the double-stranded siNA is about 21 nucleotides long.

In one embodiment, a VEGFr gene contemplated by the invention is a VEGFr1, VEGFr2, or VEGFr3 gene.

In one embodiment, the invention features the use of a double-stranded short
10 interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a
15 nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene,
20 wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, wherein the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides
25 present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification. In one embodiment, the VEGFr gene is VEGFr2. In one embodiment, the VEGFr gene is VEGFr1.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene,
30 wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand

which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA that encodes a protein or portion thereof, the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification. In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification. In one embodiment, each strand of the siNA molecule comprises about 19 to about 29 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, or 29) nucleotides, wherein each strand comprises at least about 19 nucleotides that are complementary to the nucleotides of the other strand. In another embodiment, the siNA molecule is assembled from two oligonucleotide fragments, wherein one fragment comprises the nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand of the siNA molecule and a second fragment comprises nucleotide sequence of the sense region of the siNA molecule. In yet another embodiment, the sense strand is connected to the antisense strand via a linker molecule, such as a polynucleotide linker or a non-nucleotide linker. In a further embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense strand are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense strand are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides. In still another embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense strand are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and any purine nucleotides present in the antisense strand are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the antisense strand comprises one or more 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and one or more 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides. In another embodiment, the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense strand are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides and any purine nucleotides present in the antisense strand are 2'-O-methyl

purine nucleotides. In a further embodiment the sense strand comprises a 3'-end and a 5'-end, wherein a terminal cap moiety (e.g., an inverted deoxy abasic moiety or inverted deoxy nucleotide moiety such as inverted thymidine) is present at the 5'-end, the 3'-end, or both of the 5' and 3' ends of the sense strand. In another embodiment, the antisense 5 strand comprises a phosphorothioate internucleotide linkage at the 3' end of the antisense strand. In another embodiment, the antisense strand comprises a glyceryl modification at the 3' end. In another embodiment, the 5'-end of the antisense strand optionally includes a phosphate group.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering 10 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, wherein the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide 15 sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification, and wherein each of the two strands of the siNA molecule comprises about 21 nucleotides. In one embodiment, about 21 nucleotides of each strand of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other strand of the siNA molecule. In 20 another embodiment, about 19 nucleotides of each strand of the siNA molecule are base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other strand of the siNA molecule, wherein at least two 3' terminal nucleotides of each strand of the siNA molecule are not base-paired to the nucleotides of the other strand of the siNA molecule. In another embodiment, each of the two 3' terminal nucleotides of each fragment of the siNA 25 molecule is a 2'-deoxy-pyrimidine, such as 2'-deoxy-thymidine. In another embodiment, each strand of the siNA molecule is base-paired to the complementary nucleotides of the other strand of the siNA molecule. In another embodiment, about 19 nucleotides of the antisense strand are base-paired to the nucleotide sequence of the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof. In another embodiment, about 21 nucleotides of the antisense 30 strand are base-paired to the nucleotide sequence of the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification, and wherein the 5'-end of the antisense strand optionally includes a phosphate group.

10 In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, the other strand is a sense strand which
15 comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand and wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification, and wherein the nucleotide sequence or a portion thereof of the antisense strand is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the untranslated region or a portion thereof of the VEGF and/or
20 VEGFr RNA.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double-stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that inhibits expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene, wherein one of the strands of the double-stranded siNA molecule is an antisense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof, wherein the other strand is a sense strand which comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to a nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand, wherein a majority of the pyrimidine nucleotides present in the double-stranded siNA molecule comprises a sugar modification, and wherein the nucleotide sequence of the antisense strand is complementary to a nucleotide
25 sequence of the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA or a portion thereof that is present in the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA.
30

In one embodiment, the invention features a composition comprising a siNA molecule of the invention in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

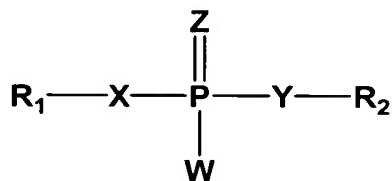
In a non-limiting example, the introduction of chemically-modified nucleotides into nucleic acid molecules provides a powerful tool in overcoming potential limitations 5 of *in vivo* stability and bioavailability inherent to native RNA molecules that are delivered exogenously. For example, the use of chemically-modified nucleic acid molecules can enable a lower dose of a particular nucleic acid molecule for a given therapeutic effect since chemically-modified nucleic acid molecules tend to have a longer half-life in serum. Furthermore, certain chemical modifications can improve the 10 bioavailability of nucleic acid molecules by targeting particular cells or tissues and/or improving cellular uptake of the nucleic acid molecule. Therefore, even if the activity of a chemically-modified nucleic acid molecule is reduced as compared to a native nucleic acid molecule, for example, when compared to an all-RNA nucleic acid molecule, the overall activity of the modified nucleic acid molecule can be greater than that of the 15 native molecule due to improved stability and/or delivery of the molecule. Unlike native unmodified siNA, chemically-modified siNA can also minimize the possibility of activating interferon activity in humans.

In any of the embodiments of siNA molecules described herein, the antisense region of a siNA molecule of the invention can comprise a phosphorothioate internucleotide linkage at the 3'-end of said antisense region. In any of the embodiments 20 of siNA molecules described herein, the antisense region can comprise about one to about five phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages at the 5'-end of said antisense region. In any of the embodiments of siNA molecules described herein, the 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs of a siNA molecule of the invention can comprise ribonucleotides 25 or deoxyribonucleotides that are chemically-modified at a nucleic acid sugar, base, or backbone. In any of the embodiments of siNA molecules described herein, the 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs can comprise one or more universal base ribonucleotides. In any of the embodiments of siNA molecules described herein, the 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs can comprise one or more acyclic nucleotides.

30 One embodiment of the invention provides an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one siNA molecule of the invention in a manner

that allows expression of the nucleic acid molecule. Another embodiment of the invention provides a mammalian cell comprising such an expression vector. The mammalian cell can be a human cell. The siNA molecule of the expression vector can comprise a sense region and an antisense region. The antisense region can comprise 5 sequence complementary to a RNA or DNA sequence encoding VEGF and/or VEGFr and the sense region can comprise sequence complementary to the antisense region. The siNA molecule can comprise two distinct strands having complementary sense and antisense regions. The siNA molecule can comprise a single strand having complementary sense and antisense regions.

10 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises one or more (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) nucleotides comprising a backbone modified internucleotide linkage having Formula I:



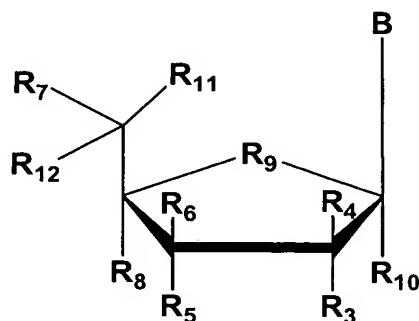
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wherein each R1 and R2 is independently any nucleotide, non-nucleotide, or polynucleotide which can be naturally-occurring or chemically-modified, each X and Y is independently O, S, N, alkyl, or substituted alkyl, each Z and W is independently O, S, N, alkyl, substituted alkyl, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, alkaryl, aralkyl, or acetyl and wherein W, X, 20 Y, and Z are optionally not all O. In another embodiment, a backbone modification of the invention comprises a phosphonoacetate and/or thiophosphonoacetate internucleotide linkage (see for example Sheehan et al., 2003, Nucleic Acids Research, 31, 4109-4118).

25 The chemically-modified internucleotide linkages having Formula I, for example, wherein any Z, W, X, and/or Y independently comprises a sulphur atom, can be present in one or both oligonucleotide strands of the siNA duplex, for example, in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. The siNA molecules of the invention can comprise one or more (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) chemically-modified internucleotide linkages having Formula I at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of

the 3' and 5'-ends of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. For example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) chemically-modified internucleotide linkages having Formula I at the 5'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In 5 another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) pyrimidine nucleotides with chemically-modified internucleotide linkages having Formula I in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In yet another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 10 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) purine nucleotides with chemically-modified internucleotide linkages having Formula I in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention having internucleotide linkage(s) of Formula I also comprises a chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide having any of Formulae I-VII.

15 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) nucleotides or non-nucleotides having Formula II:



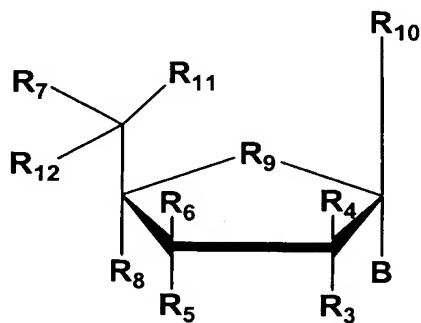
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wherein each R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, R11 and R12 is independently H, OH, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkaryl or aralkyl, F, Cl, Br, CN, CF₃, OCF₃, OCN, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, N-alkyl, O-alkenyl, S-alkenyl, N-alkenyl, SO-alkyl, alkyl-OSH, alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-SH, S-alkyl-OH, S-alkyl-SH, alkyl-S-alkyl, alkyl-O-alkyl, ONO₂, NO₂, N₃, NH₂, aminoalkyl, aminoacid, aminoacyl, ONH₂, O-aminoalkyl, O-aminoacid, O-aminoacyl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino,

substituted silyl, or group having Formula I or II; R9 is O, S, CH₂, S=O, CHF, or CF₂, and B is a nucleosidic base such as adenine, guanine, uracil, cytosine, thymine, 2-aminoadenosine, 5-methylcytosine, 2,6-diaminopurine, or any other non-naturally occurring base that can be complementary or non-complementary to target RNA or a
5 non-nucleosidic base such as phenyl, naphthyl, 3-nitropyrrole, 5-nitroindole, nebularine, pyridone, pyridinone, or any other non-naturally occurring universal base that can be complementary or non-complementary to target RNA.

The chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide of Formula II can be present in one or both oligonucleotide strands of the siNA duplex, for example in the
10 sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. The siNA molecules of the invention can comprise one or more chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide of Formula II at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. For example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) chemically-
15 modified nucleotides or non-nucleotides of Formula II at the 5'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) chemically-modified nucleotides or non-nucleotides of Formula II at the 3'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) nucleotides or non-nucleotides having Formula III:



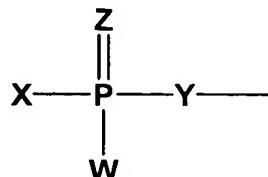
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wherein each R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, R11 and R12 is independently H, OH, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkaryl or aralkyl, F, Cl, Br, CN, CF₃, OCF₃, OCN, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, N-alkyl, O-alkenyl, S-alkenyl, N-alkenyl, SO-alkyl, alkyl-OSH, alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-SH, S-alkyl-OH, S-alkyl-SH, alkyl-S-alkyl, alkyl-O-alkyl, ONO₂, NO₂, N₃, NH₂, aminoalkyl, aminoacid, aminoacyl, ONH₂, O-aminoalkyl, O-aminoacid, O-aminoacyl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino, substituted silyl, or group having Formula I or II; R9 is O, S, CH₂, S=O, CHF, or CF₂, and B is a nucleosidic base such as adenine, guanine, uracil, cytosine, thymine, 2-aminoadenosine, 5-methylcytosine, 2,6-diaminopurine, or any other non-naturally occurring base that can be employed to be complementary or non-complementary to target RNA or a non-nucleosidic base such as phenyl, naphthyl, 3-nitropyrrole, 5-nitroindole, nebularine, pyridone, pyridinone, or any other non-naturally occurring universal base that can be complementary or non-complementary to target RNA.

The chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide of Formula III can be present in one or both oligonucleotide strands of the siNA duplex, for example, in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. The siNA molecules of the invention can comprise one or more chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide of Formula III at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. For example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) chemically-modified nucleotide(s) or non-nucleotide(s) of Formula III at the 5'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) chemically-modified nucleotide or non-nucleotide of Formula III at the 3'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises a nucleotide having Formula II or III, wherein the nucleotide having Formula II or III is in an inverted configuration. For example, the nucleotide having Formula II or III is connected to the siNA construct in a 3'-3', 3'-2', 2'-3', or 5'-5' configuration, such as at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of one or both siNA strands.

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV:



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wherein each X and Y is independently O, S, N, alkyl, substituted alkyl, or alkylhalo; wherein each Z and W is independently O, S, N, alkyl, substituted alkyl, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, alkaryl, aralkyl, alkylhalo, or acetyl; and wherein W, X, Y and Z are not all O.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV on the target-complementary strand, for example, a strand complementary to a target RNA, wherein the siNA molecule comprises an all RNA siNA molecule. In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule having a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV on the target-complementary strand wherein the siNA molecule also comprises about 1 to about 3 (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, or 15 3) nucleotide 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs having about 1 to about 4 (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, or 4) deoxyribonucleotides on the 3'-end of one or both strands. In another embodiment, a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV is present on the target-complementary strand of a siNA molecule of the invention, for example a siNA molecule having chemical modifications having any of Formulae I-VII.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises one or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages. For example, in a non-limiting example, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) having about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages in one siNA strand. In yet another embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) individually having about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or more phosphorothioate

internucleotide linkages in both siNA strands. The phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages can be present in one or both oligonucleotide strands of the siNA duplex, for example in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. The siNA molecules of the invention can comprise one or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages at 5 the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. For example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise about 1 to about 5 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) consecutive phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages at the 5'-end of the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule 10 of the invention can comprise one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) pyrimidine phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages in the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands. In yet another non-limiting example, an exemplary siNA molecule of the invention can comprise one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) purine phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages in the sense strand, 15 the antisense strand, or both strands.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule, wherein the sense strand comprises one or more, for example, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or about one or more 20 (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the sense strand; and wherein the antisense strand comprises about 1 to about 10 or more, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more phosphorothioate 25 internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the antisense strand. In another embodiment, one or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more, pyrimidine nucleotides of the sense and/or antisense siNA strand are 30 chemically-modified with 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl and/or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides, with or without one or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more, phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages and/or a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends, being present in the same or different strand.

In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule, wherein the sense strand comprises about 1 to about 5, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more)
5 universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the sense strand; and wherein the antisense strand comprises about 1 to about 5 or more, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,
10 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends
15 of the antisense strand. In another embodiment, one or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more, pyrimidine nucleotides of the sense and/or antisense siNA strand are chemically-modified with 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl and/or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides, with or without about 1 to about 5 or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages and/or a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends, being present in the same or different strand.

In one embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule, wherein the antisense strand comprises one or more, for example, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or about one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends
20 of the sense strand; and wherein the antisense strand comprises about 1 to about 10 or more, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more)
25 universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the antisense strand. In another embodiment, one or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more pyrimidine nucleotides of the sense and/or antisense siNA strand are chemically-modified with 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl and/or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides,
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with or without one or more, for example, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages and/or a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends, being present in the same or different strand.

In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule, wherein the
5 antisense strand comprises about 1 to about 5 or more, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or
more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3,
4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more
(e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) universal base modified nucleotides, and
optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends
10 of the sense strand; and wherein the antisense strand comprises about 1 to about 5 or
more, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages,
and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more) 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl,
2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro, and/or one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more)
universal base modified nucleotides, and optionally a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-
15 end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of the antisense strand. In another
embodiment, one or more, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more
pyrimidine nucleotides of the sense and/or antisense siNA strand are chemically-
modified with 2'-deoxy, 2'-O-methyl and/or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides, with or
without about 1 to about 5, for example about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more phosphorothioate
20 internucleotide linkages and/or a terminal cap molecule at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both
of the 3'- and 5'-ends, being present in the same or different strand.

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering
nucleic acid (siNA) molecule having about 1 to about 5, specifically about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or
more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages in each strand of the siNA molecule.

25 In another embodiment, the invention features a siNA molecule comprising 2'-5'
internucleotide linkages. The 2'-5' internucleotide linkage(s) can be at the 3'-end, the 5'-
end, or both of the 3'- and 5'-ends of one or both siNA sequence strands. In addition, the
2'-5' internucleotide linkage(s) can be present at various other positions within one or
both siNA sequence strands, for example, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more
30 including every internucleotide linkage of a pyrimidine nucleotide in one or both strands
of the siNA molecule can comprise a 2'-5' internucleotide linkage, or about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more including every internucleotide linkage of a purine nucleotide in one or both strands of the siNA molecule can comprise a 2'-5' internucleotide linkage.

In another embodiment, a chemically-modified siNA molecule of the invention comprises a duplex having two strands, one or both of which can be chemically-modified, wherein each strand is about 18 to about 27 (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, or 27) nucleotides in length, wherein the duplex has about 18 to about 23 (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, or 23) base pairs, and wherein the chemical modification comprises a structure having any of Formulae I-VII. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of the invention comprises a duplex having two strands, one or both of which can be chemically-modified with a chemical modification having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof, wherein each strand consists of about 21 nucleotides, each having a 2-nucleotide 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang, and wherein the duplex has about 19 base pairs. In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises a single stranded hairpin structure, wherein the siNA is about 36 to about 70 (e.g., about 36, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, or 70) nucleotides in length having about 18 to about 23 (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, or 23) base pairs, and wherein the siNA can include a chemical modification comprising a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of the invention comprises a linear oligonucleotide having about 42 to about 50 (e.g., about 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50) nucleotides that is chemically-modified with a chemical modification having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof, wherein the linear oligonucleotide forms a hairpin structure having about 19 base pairs and a 2-nucleotide 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang. In another embodiment, a linear hairpin siNA molecule of the invention contains a stem loop motif, wherein the loop portion of the siNA molecule is biodegradable. For example, a linear hairpin siNA molecule of the invention is designed such that degradation of the loop portion of the siNA molecule *in vivo* can generate a double-stranded siNA molecule with 3'-terminal overhangs, such as 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs comprising about 2 nucleotides.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises a hairpin structure, wherein the siNA is about 25 to about 50 (e.g., about 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50) nucleotides in

length having about 3 to about 25 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25) base pairs, and wherein the siNA can include one or more chemical modifications comprising a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of
5 the invention comprises a linear oligonucleotide having about 25 to about 35 (e.g., about 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, or 35) nucleotides that is chemically-modified with one or more chemical modifications having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof, wherein the linear oligonucleotide forms a hairpin structure having about 3 to about 23 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, or
10 23) base pairs and a 5'-terminal phosphate group that can be chemically modified as described herein (for example a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV). In another embodiment, a linear hairpin siNA molecule of the invention contains a stem loop motif, wherein the loop portion of the siNA molecule is biodegradable. In another embodiment, a linear hairpin siNA molecule of the invention comprises a loop portion
15 comprising a non-nucleotide linker.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises an asymmetric hairpin structure, wherein the siNA is about 25 to about 50 (e.g., about 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50) nucleotides in length having about 3 to about 20 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, or 20) base pairs, and wherein the siNA can include one or more chemical modifications comprising a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of the invention comprises a linear oligonucleotide having about 25 to about 35 (e.g., about 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, or 35) nucleotides that is chemically-modified with one or more chemical modifications having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof, wherein the linear oligonucleotide forms an asymmetric hairpin structure having about 3 to about 18 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25 16, 17 or 18) base pairs and a 5'-terminal phosphate group that can be chemically modified as described herein (for example a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV). In another embodiment, an asymmetric hairpin siNA molecule of the invention contains a stem loop motif, wherein the loop portion of the siNA molecule is biodegradable. In another embodiment, an asymmetric hairpin siNA molecule of the invention comprises a loop portion comprising a non-nucleotide linker.
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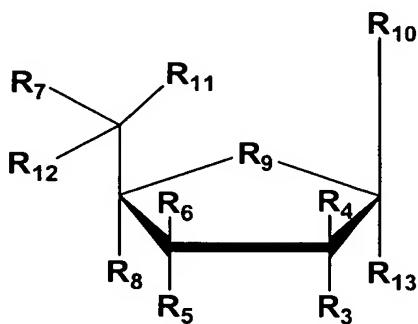
In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises an asymmetric double stranded structure having separate polynucleotide strands comprising sense and antisense regions, wherein the antisense region is about 16 to about 25 (e.g., about 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25) nucleotides in length, wherein the sense 5 region is about 3 to about 18 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18) nucleotides in length, wherein the sense region and the antisense region have at least 3 complementary nucleotides, and wherein the siNA can include one or more chemical modifications comprising a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of 10 the invention comprises an asymmetric double stranded structure having separate polynucleotide strands comprising sense and antisense regions, wherein the antisense region is about 18 to about 22 (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, or 22) nucleotides in length and wherein the sense region is about 3 to about 15 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, or 15) nucleotides in length, wherein the sense region and the antisense region have at 15 least 3 complementary nucleotides, and wherein the siNA can include one or more chemical modifications comprising a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof. In another embodiment, the asymmetric double stranded siNA molecule can also have a 5'-terminal phosphate group that can be chemically modified as described herein (for example a 5'-terminal phosphate group having Formula IV).

20 In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises a circular nucleic acid molecule, wherein the siNA is about 38 to about 70 (e.g., about 38, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, or 70) nucleotides in length having about 18 to about 23 (e.g., about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, or 23) base pairs, and wherein the siNA can include a chemical modification, which comprises a structure having any of Formulae I-VII or any 25 combination thereof. For example, an exemplary chemically-modified siNA molecule of the invention comprises a circular oligonucleotide having about 42 to about 50 (e.g., about 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50) nucleotides that is chemically-modified with a chemical modification having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof, wherein the circular oligonucleotide forms a dumbbell shaped structure having about 19 30 base pairs and 2 loops.

In another embodiment, a circular siNA molecule of the invention contains two loop motifs, wherein one or both loop portions of the siNA molecule is biodegradable.

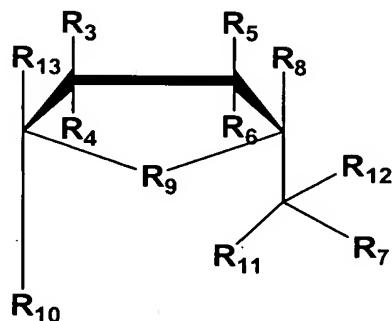
For example, a circular siNA molecule of the invention is designed such that degradation of the loop portions of the siNA molecule *in vivo* can generate a double-stranded siNA molecule with 3'-terminal overhangs, such as 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs comprising about 2 nucleotides.

5 In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises at least one (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) abasic moiety, for example a compound having Formula V:



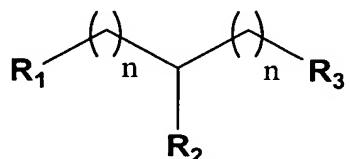
wherein each R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12, and R13 is independently H, OH, 10 alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkaryl or aralkyl, F, Cl, Br, CN, CF₃, OCF₃, OCN, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, N-alkyl, O-alkenyl, S-alkenyl, N-alkenyl, SO-alkyl, alkyl-OSH, alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-SH, S-alkyl-OH, S-alkyl-SH, alkyl-S-alkyl, alkyl-O-alkyl, ONO₂, NO₂, N₃, NH₂, aminoalkyl, aminoacid, aminoacyl, ONH₂, O-aminoalkyl, O-aminoacid, O-aminoacyl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino, 15 substituted silyl, or group having Formula I or II; R9 is O, S, CH₂, S=O, CHF, or CF₂.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises at least one (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) inverted abasic moiety, for example a compound having Formula VI:



wherein each R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12, and R13 is independently H, OH, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkaryl or aralkyl, F, Cl, Br, CN, CF3, OCF3, OCN, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, N-alkyl, O-alkenyl, S-alkenyl, N-alkenyl, SO-alkyl, alkyl-OSH, alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-SH, S-alkyl-OH, S-alkyl-SH, alkyl-S-alkyl, alkyl-O-alkyl, ONO2, NO2, N3, NH2, aminoalkyl, aminoacid, aminoacyl, ONH2, O-aminoalkyl, O-aminoacid, O-aminoacyl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino, substituted silyl, or group having Formula I or II; R9 is O, S, CH2, S=O, CHF, or CF2, and either R2, R3, R8 or R13 serve as points of attachment to the siNA molecule of the invention.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises at least one (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) substituted polyalkyl moieties, for example a compound having Formula VII:



wherein each n is independently an integer from 1 to 12, each R1, R2 and R3 is independently H, OH, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkaryl or aralkyl, F, Cl, Br, CN, CF3, OCF3, OCN, O-alkyl, S-alkyl, N-alkyl, O-alkenyl, S-alkenyl, N-alkenyl, SO-alkyl, alkyl-OSH, alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-OH, O-alkyl-SH, S-alkyl-OH, S-alkyl-SH, alkyl-S-alkyl, alkyl-O-alkyl, ONO2, NO2, N3, NH2, aminoalkyl, aminoacid, aminoacyl, ONH2, O-aminoalkyl, O-aminoacid, O-aminoacyl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino, substituted silyl, or a group having Formula I, and R1, R2 or R3 serves as points of attachment to the siNA molecule of the invention.

In another embodiment, the invention features a compound having Formula VII, wherein R1 and R2 are hydroxyl (OH) groups, n = 1, and R3 comprises O and is the point of attachment to the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of one or both strands of a double-stranded siNA molecule of the invention or to a single-stranded siNA molecule of the invention. This modification is referred to herein as "glyceryl" (for example modification 6 in **Figure 10**).

In another embodiment, a moiety having any of Formula V, VI or VII of the invention is at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of a siNA molecule of the invention. For example, a moiety having Formula V, VI or VII can be present at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of the antisense strand, the sense strand, 5 or both antisense and sense strands of the siNA molecule. In addition, a moiety having Formula VII can be present at the 3'-end or the 5'-end of a hairpin siNA molecule as described herein.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises an abasic residue having Formula V or VI, wherein the abasic residue having Formula VI or VI is 10 connected to the siNA construct in a 3'-3', 3'-2', 2'-3', or 5'-5' configuration, such as at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of one or both siNA strands.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises one or more (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) locked nucleic acid (LNA) nucleotides, for example at the 5'-end, the 3'-end, both of the 5' and 3'-ends, or any combination thereof, 15 of the siNA molecule.

In another embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention comprises one or more (*e.g.*, about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) acyclic nucleotides, for example at the 5'-end, the 3'-end, both of the 5' and 3'-ends, or any combination thereof, of the siNA molecule.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising a sense region, wherein any (*e.g.*, one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (*e.g.*, wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (*e.g.*, one or more or all) purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides (*e.g.*, wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides).
25

30 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising a sense region, wherein any

(e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) 5 purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides), wherein any nucleotides comprising a 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang that are present in said sense region are 2'-deoxy nucleotides.

10 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising a sense region, wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 15 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides).

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising a sense region, wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) purine 25 nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides), and wherein any nucleotides comprising a 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang that are present in said sense region are 2'-deoxy nucleotides.

30 In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising an antisense region, wherein

any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (e.g., one or
5 more or all) purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides).

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising an antisense region, wherein
10 any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine
15 nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides), and wherein any nucleotides comprising a 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang that are present in said antisense region are 2'-deoxy nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising an antisense region, wherein
20 any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (e.g., one or
25 more or all) purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides).

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention comprising an antisense region, wherein
30 any (e.g., one or more or all) pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are

2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any (e.g., one or more or all) purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides).

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system comprising a sense region, wherein one or more pyrimidine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and one or more purine nucleotides present in the sense region are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides), and an antisense region, wherein one or more pyrimidine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and one or more purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides). The sense region and/or the antisense region can have a terminal cap modification, such as any modification described herein or shown in **Figure 10**, that is optionally present at the 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of the sense and/or antisense sequence. The sense and/or antisense region can optionally further comprise a 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang having about 1 to about 4 (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, or 4) 2'-deoxynucleotides. The overhang nucleotides can further comprise one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4 or more) phosphorothioate, phosphonoacetate, and/or thiophosphonoacetate internucleotide linkages. Non-limiting examples of these chemically-modified siNAs are shown in **Figures 4 and 5 and Tables III and IV** herein. In any of these described embodiments, the purine nucleotides present in the sense region are alternatively 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine

nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides) and one or more purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides). Also, in any of these embodiments, one
5 or more purine nucleotides present in the sense region are alternatively purine ribonucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are purine ribonucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are purine ribonucleotides) and any purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a
10 plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides). Additionally, in any of these embodiments, one or more purine nucleotides present in the sense region and/or present in the antisense region are alternatively selected from the group consisting of 2'-deoxy nucleotides, locked nucleic acid (LNA) nucleotides, 2'-methoxyethyl nucleotides,
15 4'-thionucleotides, and 2'-O-methyl nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are selected from the group consisting of 2'-deoxy nucleotides, locked nucleic acid (LNA) nucleotides, 2'-methoxyethyl nucleotides, 4'-thionucleotides, and 2'-O-methyl nucleotides).
20

In another embodiment, any modified nucleotides present in the siNA molecules of the invention, preferably in the antisense strand of the siNA molecules of the invention, but also optionally in the sense and/or both antisense and sense strands, comprise modified nucleotides having properties or characteristics similar to naturally occurring ribonucleotides. For example, the invention features siNA molecules including modified
25 nucleotides having a Northern conformation (e.g., Northern pseudorotation cycle, see for example Saenger, *Principles of Nucleic Acid Structure*, Springer-Verlag ed., 1984). As such, chemically modified nucleotides present in the siNA molecules of the invention, preferably in the antisense strand of the siNA molecules of the invention, but also optionally in the sense and/or both antisense and sense strands, are resistant to nuclease
30 degradation while at the same time maintaining the capacity to mediate RNAi. Non-limiting examples of nucleotides having a northern configuration include locked nucleic acid (LNA) nucleotides (e.g., 2'-O, 4'-C-methylene-(D-ribofuranosyl) nucleotides); 2'-methoxyethoxy (MOE) nucleotides; 2'-methyl-thio-ethyl, 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro

nucleotides, 2'-deoxy-2'-chloro nucleotides, 2'-azido nucleotides, and 2'-O-methyl nucleotides.

In one embodiment, the sense strand of a double stranded siNA molecule of the invention comprises a terminal cap moiety, (see for example **Figure 10**) such as an inverted deoxyabaisc moiety, at the 3'-end, 5'-end, or both 3' and 5'-ends of the sense strand.

In one embodiment, the invention features a chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid molecule (siNA) capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) against a VEGF and/or VEGFr inside a cell or reconstituted *in vitro* system, wherein the chemical modification comprises a conjugate covalently attached to the chemically-modified siNA molecule. Non-limiting examples of conjugates contemplated by the invention include conjugates and ligands described in Vargeese *et al.*, USSN 10/427,160, filed April 30, 2003, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety, including the drawings. In another embodiment, the conjugate is covalently attached to the chemically-modified siNA molecule via a biodegradable linker. In one embodiment, the conjugate molecule is attached at the 3'-end of either the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands of the chemically-modified siNA molecule. In another embodiment, the conjugate molecule is attached at the 5'-end of either the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands of the chemically-modified siNA molecule. In yet another embodiment, the conjugate molecule is attached both the 3'-end and 5'-end of either the sense strand, the antisense strand, or both strands of the chemically-modified siNA molecule, or any combination thereof. In one embodiment, a conjugate molecule of the invention comprises a molecule that facilitates delivery of a chemically-modified siNA molecule into a biological system, such as a cell. In another embodiment, the conjugate molecule attached to the chemically-modified siNA molecule is a polyethylene glycol, human serum albumin, or a ligand for a cellular receptor that can mediate cellular uptake. Examples of specific conjugate molecules contemplated by the instant invention that can be attached to chemically-modified siNA molecules are described in Vargeese *et al.*, U.S. Serial No. 10/201,394, incorporated by reference herein. The type of conjugates used and the extent of conjugation of siNA molecules of the invention can be evaluated for improved pharmacokinetic profiles, bioavailability, and/or stability of siNA constructs while at the same time maintaining the ability of the siNA to mediate RNAi

activity. As such, one skilled in the art can screen siNA constructs that are modified with various conjugates to determine whether the siNA conjugate complex possesses improved properties while maintaining the ability to mediate RNAi, for example in animal models as are generally known in the art.

5 In one embodiment, the invention features a short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule of the invention, wherein the siNA further comprises a nucleotide, non-nucleotide, or mixed nucleotide/non-nucleotide linker that joins the sense region of the siNA to the antisense region of the siNA. In one embodiment, a nucleotide linker of the invention can be a linker of \geq 2 nucleotides in length, for example about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,
10 9, or 10 nucleotides in length. In another embodiment, the nucleotide linker can be a nucleic acid aptamer. By “aptamer” or “nucleic acid aptamer” as used herein is meant a nucleic acid molecule that binds specifically to a target molecule wherein the nucleic acid molecule has sequence that comprises a sequence recognized by the target molecule in its natural setting. Alternately, an aptamer can be a nucleic acid molecule that binds to
15 a target molecule where the target molecule does not naturally bind to a nucleic acid. The target molecule can be any molecule of interest. For example, the aptamer can be used to bind to a ligand-binding domain of a protein, thereby preventing interaction of the naturally occurring ligand with the protein. This is a non-limiting example and those in the art will recognize that other embodiments can be readily generated using
20 techniques generally known in the art. (See, for example, Gold *et al.*, 1995, *Annu. Rev. Biochem.*, 64, 763; Brody and Gold, 2000, *J. Biotechnol.*, 74, 5; Sun, 2000, *Curr. Opin. Mol. Ther.*, 2, 100; Kusser, 2000, *J. Biotechnol.*, 74, 27; Hermann and Patel, 2000, *Science*, 287, 820; and Jayasena, 1999, *Clinical Chemistry*, 45, 1628.)

In yet another embodiment, a non-nucleotide linker of the invention comprises
25 abasic nucleotide, polyether, polyamine, polyamide, peptide, carbohydrate, lipid, polyhydrocarbon, or other polymeric compounds (e.g. polyethylene glycols such as those having between 2 and 100 ethylene glycol units). Specific examples include those described by Seela and Kaiser, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 1990, 18:6353 and *Nucleic Acids Res.* 1987, 15:3113; Cload and Schepartz, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* 1991, 113:6324; Richardson and
30 Schepartz, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* 1991, 113:5109; Ma *et al.*, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 1993, 21:2585 and *Biochemistry* 1993, 32:1751; Durand *et al.*, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 1990, 18:6353; McCurdy *et al.*, *Nucleosides & Nucleotides* 1991, 10:287; Jschke *et al.*,

Tetrahedron Lett. 1993, 34:301; Ono *et al.*, *Biochemistry* 1991, 30:9914; Arnold *et al.*, International Publication No. WO 89/02439; Usman *et al.*, International Publication No. WO 95/06731; Dudycz *et al.*, International Publication No. WO 95/11910 and Ferentz and Verdine, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* 1991, 113:4000, all hereby incorporated by reference
5 herein. A "non-nucleotide" further means any group or compound that can be incorporated into a nucleic acid chain in the place of one or more nucleotide units, including either sugar and/or phosphate substitutions, and allows the remaining bases to exhibit their enzymatic activity. The group or compound can be abasic in that it does not contain a commonly recognized nucleotide base, such as adenosine, guanine, cytosine,
10 uracil or thymine, for example at the C1 position of the sugar.

In one embodiment, the invention features a short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule capable of mediating RNA interference (RNAi) inside a cell or reconstituted in vitro system, wherein one or both strands of the siNA molecule that are assembled from two separate oligonucleotides do not comprise any ribonucleotides. For example, a siNA
15 molecule can be assembled from a single oligonucleotide where the sense and antisense regions of the siNA comprise separate oligonucleotides not having any ribonucleotides (e.g., nucleotides having a 2'-OH group) present in the oligonucleotides. In another example, a siNA molecule can be assembled from a single oligonucleotide where the sense and antisense regions of the siNA are linked or circularized by a nucleotide or non-
20 nucleotide linker as described herein, wherein the oligonucleotide does not have any ribonucleotides (e.g., nucleotides having a 2'-OH group) present in the oligonucleotide. Applicant has surprisingly found that the presence of ribonucleotides (e.g., nucleotides having a 2'-hydroxyl group) within the siNA molecule is not required or essential to support RNAi activity. As such, in one embodiment, all positions within the siNA can include chemically modified nucleotides and/or non-nucleotides such as nucleotides and
25 or non-nucleotides having Formula I, II, III, IV, V, VI, or VII or any combination thereof to the extent that the ability of the siNA molecule to support RNAi activity in a cell is maintained.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is a single stranded siNA
30 molecule that mediates RNAi activity in a cell or reconstituted in vitro system comprising a single stranded polynucleotide having complementarity to a target nucleic acid sequence. In another embodiment, the single stranded siNA molecule of the

invention comprises a 5'-terminal phosphate group. In another embodiment, the single stranded siNA molecule of the invention comprises a 5'-terminal phosphate group and a 3'-terminal phosphate group (e.g., a 2',3'-cyclic phosphate). In another embodiment, the single stranded siNA molecule of the invention comprises about 19 to about 29 (e.g., 5 about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, or 29) nucleotides. In yet another embodiment, the single stranded siNA molecule of the invention comprises one or more chemically modified nucleotides or non-nucleotides described herein. For example, all the positions within the siNA molecule can include chemically-modified nucleotides such as nucleotides having any of Formulae I-VII, or any combination thereof to the 10 extent that the ability of the siNA molecule to support RNAi activity in a cell is maintained.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is a single stranded siNA molecule that mediates RNAi activity in a cell or reconstituted in vitro system comprising a single stranded polynucleotide having complementarity to a target nucleic acid 15 sequence, wherein one or more pyrimidine nucleotides present in the siNA are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of pyrimidine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro pyrimidine nucleotides), and wherein any purine nucleotides present in the antisense region are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine 20 nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-O-methyl purine nucleotides), and a terminal cap modification, such as any modification described herein or shown in **Figure 10**, that is optionally present at the 25 3'-end, the 5'-end, or both of the 3' and 5'-ends of the antisense sequence. The siNA optionally further comprises about 1 to about 4 or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4 or more) terminal 2'-deoxynucleotides at the 3'-end of the siNA molecule, wherein the terminal nucleotides can further comprise one or more (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4 or more) phosphorothioate, phosphonoacetate, and/or thiophosphonoacetate internucleotide linkages, and wherein the siNA optionally further comprises a terminal phosphate group, such as a 5'-terminal phosphate group. In any of these embodiments, any purine nucleotides present in the 30 antisense region are alternatively 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-deoxy purine nucleotides). Also, in any of these embodiments, any

purine nucleotides present in the siNA (i.e., purine nucleotides present in the sense and/or antisense region) can alternatively be locked nucleic acid (LNA) nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are LNA nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are LNA nucleotides). Also, in any of these embodiments, any purine
5 nucleotides present in the siNA are alternatively 2'-methoxyethyl purine nucleotides (e.g., wherein all purine nucleotides are 2'-methoxyethyl purine nucleotides or alternately a plurality of purine nucleotides are 2'-methoxyethyl purine nucleotides). In another embodiment, any modified nucleotides present in the single stranded siNA molecules of the invention comprise modified nucleotides having properties or
10 characteristics similar to naturally occurring ribonucleotides. For example, the invention features siNA molecules including modified nucleotides having a Northern conformation (e.g., Northern pseudorotation cycle, see for example Saenger, *Principles of Nucleic Acid Structure*, Springer-Verlag ed., 1984). As such, chemically modified nucleotides present in the single stranded siNA molecules of the invention are preferably resistant to
15 nuclease degradation while at the same time maintaining the capacity to mediate RNAi.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene;
20 and (b) introducing the siNA molecule into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the cell.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene and wherein the sense strand sequence of the siNA comprises a sequence identical or substantially similar to the sequence of the target RNA; and (b) introducing the siNA molecule into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the cell.
25

30 In another embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a)

synthesizing siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes; and (b) introducing the siNA molecules into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the

5 cell.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of two or more VEGF and/or VEGFr genes within a cell comprising: (a) synthesizing one or more siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA strands comprise sequences complementary to RNA of the

10 VEGF and/or VEGFr genes and wherein the sense strand sequences of the siNAs comprise sequences identical or substantially similar to the sequences of the target RNAs; and (b) introducing the siNA molecules into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the cell.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene and wherein the sense strand sequence of the siNA comprises a sequence identical or substantially similar to the sequences of the target RNAs; and (b)

20 introducing the siNA molecule into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the cell.

In one embodiment, siNA molecules of the invention are used as reagents in ex vivo applications. For example, siNA reagents are introduced into tissue or cells that are transplanted into a subject for therapeutic effect. The cells and/or tissue can be derived from an organism or subject that later receives the explant, or can be derived from another organism or subject prior to transplantation. The siNA molecules can be used to modulate the expression of one or more genes in the cells or tissue, such that the cells or tissue obtain a desired phenotype or are able to perform a function when transplanted in vivo. In one embodiment, certain target cells from a patient are extracted. These extracted cells are contacted with siNAs targeting a specific nucleotide sequence within the cells under conditions suitable for uptake of the siNAs by these cells (e.g. using

delivery reagents such as cationic lipids, liposomes and the like or using techniques such as electroporation to facilitate the delivery of siRNAs into cells). The cells are then reintroduced back into the same patient or other patients. In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene 5 in a tissue explant comprising: (a) synthesizing a siRNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siRNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siRNA molecule into a cell of the tissue explant derived from a particular organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the 10 tissue explant. In another embodiment, the method further comprises introducing the tissue explant back into the organism the tissue was derived from or into another organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in that organism.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression 15 of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in a tissue explant comprising: (a) synthesizing a siRNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siRNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene and wherein the sense strand sequence of the siRNA comprises a sequence identical or substantially similar to the sequence of the target RNA; and (b) introducing the siRNA 20 molecule into a cell of the tissue explant derived from a particular organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the tissue explant. In another embodiment, the method further comprises introducing the tissue explant back into the organism the tissue was derived from or into another organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or 25 VEGFr gene in that organism.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in a tissue explant comprising: (a) synthesizing siRNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siRNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the 30 VEGF and/or VEGFr genes; and (b) introducing the siRNA molecules into a cell of the tissue explant derived from a particular organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the tissue explant. In another

embodiment, the method further comprises introducing the tissue explant back into the organism the tissue was derived from or into another organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in that organism.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression
5 of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siNA molecule into the organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the organism. The level of
10 VEGF or VEGFr can be determined as is known in the art or as described in Pavco USSN 10/438,493, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety including the drawings.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising: (a)
15 synthesizing siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands comprises a sequence complementary to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes; and (b) introducing the siNA molecules into the organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the organism. The level of VEGF or VEGFr can be determined as is known in the art
20 or as described in Pavco USSN 10/438,493, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety including the drawings.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA
25 comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siNA molecule into a cell under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the cell.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene within a cell comprising: (a)
30 synthesizing siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA

of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) contacting the cell in vitro or in vivo with the siNA molecule under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the cell.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression
5 of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in a tissue explant comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA
molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA
comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA of the VEGF
and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) contacting the cell of the tissue explant derived from a
particular organism with the siNA molecule under conditions suitable to modulate the
10 expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the tissue explant. In another
embodiment, the method further comprises introducing the tissue explant back into the
organism the tissue was derived from or into another organism under conditions suitable
to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in that organism.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the
15 expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in a tissue explant comprising:
(a) synthesizing siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified,
wherein the siNA comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA
of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siNA molecules into a cell of
the tissue explant derived from a particular organism under conditions suitable to
20 modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the tissue explant. In
another embodiment, the method further comprises introducing the tissue explant back
into the organism the tissue was derived from or into another organism under conditions
suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in that organism.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression
25 of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA
molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA
comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA of the VEGF
and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siNA molecule into the organism under
conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the
30 organism.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising: (a) synthesizing siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein the siNA comprises a single stranded sequence having complementarity to RNA of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene; and (b) introducing the siNA molecules into the organism under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the organism.

5 In one embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising contacting the organism with
10 a siNA molecule of the invention under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in the organism.

15 In another embodiment, the invention features a method of modulating the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr gene in an organism comprising contacting the organism with one or more siNA molecules of the invention under conditions suitable to modulate the expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr genes in the organism.

The siNA molecules of the invention can be designed to down regulate or inhibit target (VEGF and/or VEGFr) gene expression through RNAi targeting of a variety of RNA molecules. In one embodiment, the siNA molecules of the invention are used to
20 target various RNAs corresponding to a target gene. Non-limiting examples of such RNAs include messenger RNA (mRNA), alternate RNA splice variants of target gene(s), post-transcriptionally modified RNA of target gene(s), pre-mRNA of target gene(s), and/or RNA templates. If alternate splicing produces a family of transcripts that are distinguished by usage of appropriate exons, the instant invention can be used to inhibit
25 gene expression through the appropriate exons to specifically inhibit or to distinguish among the functions of gene family members. For example, a protein that contains an alternatively spliced transmembrane domain can be expressed in both membrane bound and secreted forms. Use of the invention to target the exon containing the transmembrane domain can be used to determine the functional consequences of
30 pharmaceutical targeting of membrane bound as opposed to the secreted form of the protein. Non-limiting examples of applications of the invention relating to targeting

these RNA molecules include therapeutic pharmaceutical applications, pharmaceutical discovery applications, molecular diagnostic and gene function applications, and gene mapping, for example using single nucleotide polymorphism mapping with siNA molecules of the invention. Such applications can be implemented using known gene
5 sequences or from partial sequences available from an expressed sequence tag (EST).

In another embodiment, the siNA molecules of the invention are used to target conserved sequences corresponding to a gene family or gene families such as VEGF and/or VEGFr family genes. As such, siNA molecules targeting multiple VEGF and/or VEGFr targets can provide increased therapeutic effect. In addition, siNA can be used to
10 characterize pathways of gene function in a variety of applications. For example, the present invention can be used to inhibit the activity of target gene(s) in a pathway to determine the function of uncharacterized gene(s) in gene function analysis, mRNA function analysis, or translational analysis. The invention can be used to determine potential target gene pathways involved in various diseases and conditions toward
15 pharmaceutical development. The invention can be used to understand pathways of gene expression involved in, for example, the progression and/or maintenance of cancer.

In one embodiment, siNA molecule(s) and/or methods of the invention are used to down regulate the expression of gene(s) that encode RNA referred to by Genbank Accession, for example VEGF and/or VEGFr genes encoding RNA sequence(s) referred to herein by Genbank Accession number, for example, Genbank Accession Nos. shown
20 in **Table I**.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method comprising: (a) generating a library of siNA constructs having a predetermined complexity; and (b) assaying the siNA constructs of (a) above, under conditions suitable to determine RNAi target sites within
25 the target RNA sequence. In one embodiment, the siNA molecules of (a) have strands of a fixed length, for example, about 23 nucleotides in length. In another embodiment, the siNA molecules of (a) are of differing length, for example having strands of about 19 to about 25 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25) nucleotides in length. In one embodiment, the assay can comprise a reconstituted *in vitro* siNA assay as described
30 herein. In another embodiment, the assay can comprise a cell culture system in which target RNA is expressed. In another embodiment, fragments of target RNA are analyzed

for detectable levels of cleavage, for example by gel electrophoresis, northern blot analysis, or RNase protection assays, to determine the most suitable target site(s) within the target RNA sequence. The target RNA sequence can be obtained as is known in the art, for example, by cloning and/or transcription for *in vitro* systems, and by cellular expression in *in vivo* systems.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method comprising: (a) generating a randomized library of siNA constructs having a predetermined complexity, such as of 4^N , where N represents the number of base paired nucleotides in each of the siNA construct strands (e.g. for a siNA construct having 21 nucleotide sense and antisense strands with 19 base pairs, the complexity would be 4^{19}); and (b) assaying the siNA constructs of (a) above, under conditions suitable to determine RNAi target sites within the target VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA sequence. In another embodiment, the siNA molecules of (a) have strands of a fixed length, for example about 23 nucleotides in length. In yet another embodiment, the siNA molecules of (a) are of differing length, for example having strands of about 19 to about 25 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25) nucleotides in length. In one embodiment, the assay can comprise a reconstituted *in vitro* siNA assay as described in Example 7 herein. In another embodiment, the assay can comprise a cell culture system in which target RNA is expressed. In another embodiment, fragments of VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA are analyzed for detectable levels of cleavage, for example by gel electrophoresis, northern blot analysis, or RNase protection assays, to determine the most suitable target site(s) within the target VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA sequence. The target VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA sequence can be obtained as is known in the art, for example, by cloning and/or transcription for *in vitro* systems, and by cellular expression in *in vivo* systems.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method comprising: (a) analyzing the sequence of a RNA target encoded by a target gene; (b) synthesizing one or more sets of siNA molecules having sequence complementary to one or more regions of the RNA of (a); and (c) assaying the siNA molecules of (b) under conditions suitable to determine RNAi targets within the target RNA sequence. In one embodiment, the siNA molecules of (b) have strands of a fixed length, for example about 23 nucleotides in length. In another embodiment, the siNA molecules of (b) are of differing length, for example having strands of about 19 to about 25 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25)

nucleotides in length. In one embodiment, the assay can comprise a reconstituted *in vitro* siNA assay as described herein. In another embodiment, the assay can comprise a cell culture system in which target RNA is expressed. Fragments of target RNA are analyzed for detectable levels of cleavage, for example by gel electrophoresis, northern blot analysis, or RNase protection assays, to determine the most suitable target site(s) within the target RNA sequence. The target RNA sequence can be obtained as is known in the art, for example, by cloning and/or transcription for *in vitro* systems, and by expression in *in vivo* systems.

By "target site" is meant a sequence within a target RNA that is "targeted" for cleavage mediated by a siNA construct which contains sequences within its antisense region that are complementary to the target sequence.

By "detectable level of cleavage" is meant cleavage of target RNA (and formation of cleaved product RNAs) to an extent sufficient to discern cleavage products above the background of RNAs produced by random degradation of the target RNA. Production of cleavage products from 1-5% of the target RNA is sufficient to detect above the background for most methods of detection.

In one embodiment, the invention features a composition comprising a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent. In another embodiment, the invention features a pharmaceutical composition comprising siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, targeting one or more genes in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent. In another embodiment, the invention features a method for diagnosing a disease or condition in a subject comprising administering to the subject a composition of the invention under conditions suitable for the diagnosis of the disease or condition in the subject. In another embodiment, the invention features a method for treating or preventing a disease or condition in a subject, comprising administering to the subject a composition of the invention under conditions suitable for the treatment or prevention of the disease or condition in the subject, alone or in conjunction with one or more other therapeutic compounds. In yet another embodiment, the invention features a method for reducing or preventing tissue rejection in a subject comprising administering

to the subject a composition of the invention under conditions suitable for the reduction or prevention of tissue rejection in the subject.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for validating a VEGF and/or VEGFr gene target, comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands includes a sequence complementary to RNA of a VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene; (b) introducing the siNA molecule into a cell, tissue, or organism under conditions suitable for modulating expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene in the cell, tissue, or organism; and (c) determining the function of the gene by assaying for any phenotypic change in the cell, tissue, or organism.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for validating a VEGF and/or VEGFr target comprising: (a) synthesizing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, wherein one of the siNA strands includes a sequence complementary to RNA of a VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene; (b) introducing the siNA molecule into a biological system under conditions suitable for modulating expression of the VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene in the biological system; and (c) determining the function of the gene by assaying for any phenotypic change in the biological system.

By "biological system" is meant, material, in a purified or unpurified form, from biological sources, including but not limited to human, animal, plant, insect, bacterial, viral or other sources, wherein the system comprises the components required for RNAi activity. The term "biological system" includes, for example, a cell, tissue, or organism, or extract thereof. The term biological system also includes reconstituted RNAi systems that can be used in an *in vitro* setting.

By "phenotypic change" is meant any detectable change to a cell that occurs in response to contact or treatment with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention (e.g., siNA). Such detectable changes include, but are not limited to, changes in shape, size, proliferation, motility, protein expression or RNA expression or other physical or chemical changes as can be assayed by methods known in the art. The detectable change can also include expression of reporter genes/molecules such as Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) or various tags that are used to identify an expressed protein or any other cellular component that can be assayed.

In one embodiment, the invention features a kit containing a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, that can be used to modulate the expression of a VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene in a biological system, including, for example, in a cell, tissue, or organism. In another embodiment, the invention features a 5 kit containing more than one siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, that can be used to modulate the expression of more than one VEGF and/or VEGFr target gene in a biological system, including, for example, in a cell, tissue, or organism.

10 In one embodiment, the invention features a cell containing one or more siNA molecules of the invention, which can be chemically-modified. In another embodiment, the cell containing a siNA molecule of the invention is a mammalian cell. In yet another embodiment, the cell containing a siNA molecule of the invention is a human cell.

15 In one embodiment, the synthesis of a siNA molecule of the invention, which can be chemically-modified, comprises: (a) synthesis of two complementary strands of the siNA molecule; (b) annealing the two complementary strands together under conditions suitable to obtain a double-stranded siNA molecule. In another embodiment, synthesis of the two complementary strands of the siNA molecule is by solid phase oligonucleotide synthesis. In yet another embodiment, synthesis of the two complementary strands of the siNA molecule is by solid phase tandem oligonucleotide synthesis.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a method for synthesizing a siNA duplex molecule comprising: (a) synthesizing a first oligonucleotide sequence strand of the siNA molecule, wherein the first oligonucleotide sequence strand comprises a cleavable linker molecule that can be used as a scaffold for the synthesis of the second oligonucleotide sequence strand of the siNA; (b) synthesizing the second oligonucleotide 25 sequence strand of siNA on the scaffold of the first oligonucleotide sequence strand, wherein the second oligonucleotide sequence strand further comprises a chemical moiety than can be used to purify the siNA duplex; (c) cleaving the linker molecule of (a) under conditions suitable for the two siNA oligonucleotide strands to hybridize and form a stable duplex; and (d) purifying the siNA duplex utilizing the chemical moiety of the second oligonucleotide sequence strand. In one embodiment, cleavage of the linker molecule in (c) above takes place during deprotection of the oligonucleotide, for example 30

under hydrolysis conditions using an alkylamine base such as methylamine. In one embodiment, the method of synthesis comprises solid phase synthesis on a solid support such as controlled pore glass (CPG) or polystyrene, wherein the first sequence of (a) is synthesized on a cleavable linker, such as a succinyl linker, using the solid support as a scaffold. The cleavable linker in (a) used as a scaffold for synthesizing the second strand can comprise similar reactivity as the solid support derivatized linker, such that cleavage of the solid support derivatized linker and the cleavable linker of (a) takes place concomitantly. In another embodiment, the chemical moiety of (b) that can be used to isolate the attached oligonucleotide sequence comprises a trityl group, for example a dimethoxytrityl group, which can be employed in a trityl-on synthesis strategy as described herein. In yet another embodiment, the chemical moiety, such as a dimethoxytrityl group, is removed during purification, for example, using acidic conditions.

In a further embodiment, the method for siNA synthesis is a solution phase synthesis or hybrid phase synthesis wherein both strands of the siNA duplex are synthesized in tandem using a cleavable linker attached to the first sequence which acts a scaffold for synthesis of the second sequence. Cleavage of the linker under conditions suitable for hybridization of the separate siNA sequence strands results in formation of the double-stranded siNA molecule.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for synthesizing a siNA duplex molecule comprising: (a) synthesizing one oligonucleotide sequence strand of the siNA molecule, wherein the sequence comprises a cleavable linker molecule that can be used as a scaffold for the synthesis of another oligonucleotide sequence; (b) synthesizing a second oligonucleotide sequence having complementarity to the first sequence strand on the scaffold of (a), wherein the second sequence comprises the other strand of the double-stranded siNA molecule and wherein the second sequence further comprises a chemical moiety than can be used to isolate the attached oligonucleotide sequence; (c) purifying the product of (b) utilizing the chemical moiety of the second oligonucleotide sequence strand under conditions suitable for isolating the full-length sequence comprising both siNA oligonucleotide strands connected by the cleavable linker and under conditions suitable for the two siNA oligonucleotide strands to hybridize and form a stable duplex. In one embodiment, cleavage of the linker molecule

in (c) above takes place during deprotection of the oligonucleotide, for example under hydrolysis conditions. In another embodiment, cleavage of the linker molecule in (c) above takes place after deprotection of the oligonucleotide. In another embodiment, the method of synthesis comprises solid phase synthesis on a solid support such as controlled
5 pore glass (CPG) or polystyrene, wherein the first sequence of (a) is synthesized on a cleavable linker, such as a succinyl linker, using the solid support as a scaffold. The cleavable linker in (a) used as a scaffold for synthesizing the second strand can comprise similar reactivity or differing reactivity as the solid support derivatized linker, such that cleavage of the solid support derivatized linker and the cleavable linker of (a) takes place
10 either concomitantly or sequentially. In one embodiment, the chemical moiety of (b) that can be used to isolate the attached oligonucleotide sequence comprises a trityl group, for example a dimethoxytrityl group.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for making a double-stranded siNA molecule in a single synthetic process comprising: (a) synthesizing an
15 oligonucleotide having a first and a second sequence, wherein the first sequence is complementary to the second sequence, and the first oligonucleotide sequence is linked to the second sequence via a cleavable linker, and wherein a terminal 5'-protecting group, for example, a 5'-O-dimethoxytrityl group (5'-O-DMT) remains on the oligonucleotide having the second sequence; (b) deprotecting the oligonucleotide whereby the
20 deprotection results in the cleavage of the linker joining the two oligonucleotide sequences; and (c) purifying the product of (b) under conditions suitable for isolating the double-stranded siNA molecule, for example using a trityl-on synthesis strategy as described herein.

In another embodiment, the method of synthesis of siNA molecules of the
25 invention comprises the teachings of Scaringe *et al.*, US Patent Nos. 5,889,136; 6,008,400; and 6,111,086, incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications, for example, one or more chemical modifications having any of
30 Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof that increases the nuclease resistance of the siNA construct.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with increased nuclease resistance comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having increased nuclease resistance.

In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that modulates the binding affinity between the sense and antisense strands of the siNA construct.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with increased binding affinity between the sense and antisense strands of the siNA molecule comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having increased binding affinity between the sense and antisense strands of the siNA molecule.

In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that modulates the binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA construct and a complementary target RNA sequence within a cell.

In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that modulates the binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA construct and a complementary target DNA sequence within a cell.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with increased binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA molecule and a complementary target RNA sequence comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for

isolating siNA molecules having increased binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA molecule and a complementary target RNA sequence.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with increased binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA molecule and a complementary target DNA sequence comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having increased binding affinity between the antisense strand of the siNA molecule and a complementary target DNA sequence.

10 In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that modulate the polymerase activity of a cellular polymerase capable of generating additional endogenous siNA molecules having sequence homology to the chemically-modified siNA construct.

15 In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules capable of mediating increased polymerase activity of a cellular polymerase capable of generating additional endogenous siNA molecules having sequence homology to a chemically-modified siNA molecule comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules capable of mediating increased polymerase activity of a cellular polymerase capable of generating additional endogenous siNA molecules having sequence homology to the chemically-modified siNA molecule.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features chemically-modified siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr in a cell, wherein the chemical modifications do not significantly effect the interaction of siNA with a target RNA molecule, DNA molecule and/or proteins or other factors that are essential for RNAi in a manner that would decrease the efficacy of RNAi mediated by such siNA constructs.

25 In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with improved RNAi activity against VEGF and/or VEGFr comprising (a)

introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved RNAi activity.

5 In yet another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with improved RNAi activity against a VEGF and/or VEGFr target RNA comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved RNAi activity against the target RNA.

10 In yet another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules with improved RNAi activity against a VEGF and/or VEGFr target DNA comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved RNAi activity against 15 the target DNA.

In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that modulates the cellular uptake of the siNA construct.

20 In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules against VEGF and/or VEGFr with improved cellular uptake comprising (a) introducing nucleotides having any of Formula I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved cellular uptake.

25 In one embodiment, the invention features siNA constructs that mediate RNAi against a VEGF and/or VEGFr, wherein the siNA construct comprises one or more chemical modifications described herein that increases the bioavailability of the siNA construct, for example, by attaching polymeric conjugates such as polyethyleneglycol or equivalent conjugates that improve the pharmacokinetics of the siNA construct, or by 30 attaching conjugates that target specific tissue types or cell types *in vivo*. Non-limiting

examples of such conjugates are described in Vargeese *et al.*, U.S. Serial No. 10/201,394 incorporated by reference herein.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules of the invention with improved bioavailability, comprising (a) introducing a 5 conjugate into the structure of a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved bioavailability. Such conjugates can include ligands for cellular receptors, such as peptides derived from naturally occurring protein ligands; protein localization sequences, including cellular ZIP code sequences; antibodies; nucleic acid aptamers; vitamins and 10 other co-factors, such as folate and N-acetylgalactosamine; polymers, such as polyethyleneglycol (PEG); phospholipids; cholesterol; polyamines, such as spermine or spermidine; and others.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering 15 nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having complementarity to said first sequence, wherein said second sequence is chemically modified in a manner that it can no longer act as a guide sequence for efficiently mediating RNA interference and/or be recognized by cellular proteins that facilitate RNAi.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having complementarity to said first sequence, wherein the second sequence is designed or modified in a manner that prevents its entry into the RNAi pathway as a guide sequence 25 or as a sequence that is complementary to a target nucleic acid (e.g., RNA) sequence. Such design or modifications are expected to enhance the activity of siNA and/or improve the specificity of siNA molecules of the invention. These modifications are also expected to minimize any off-target effects and/or associated toxicity.

30 In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having

complementarity to said first sequence, wherein said second sequence is incapable of acting as a guide sequence for mediating RNA interference.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having complementarity to said first sequence, wherein said second sequence does not have a terminal 5'-hydroxyl (5'-OH) or 5'-phosphate group.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having complementarity to said first sequence, wherein said second sequence comprises a terminal cap moiety at the 5'-end of said second sequence. In one embodiment, the terminal cap moiety comprises an inverted abasic, inverted deoxy abasic, inverted nucleotide moiety, a group shown in **Figure 10**, an alkyl or cycloalkyl group, a heterocycle, or any other group that prevents RNAi activity in which the second sequence serves as a guide sequence or template for RNAi.

In one embodiment, the invention features a double stranded short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecule that comprises a first nucleotide sequence complementary to a target RNA sequence or a portion thereof, and a second sequence having complementarity to said first sequence, wherein said second sequence comprises a terminal cap moiety at the 5'-end and 3'-end of said second sequence. In one embodiment, each terminal cap moiety individually comprises an inverted abasic, inverted deoxy abasic, inverted nucleotide moiety, a group shown in **Figure 10**, an alkyl or cycloalkyl group, a heterocycle, or any other group that prevents RNAi activity in which the second sequence serves as a guide sequence or template for RNAi.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules of the invention with improved specificity for down regulating or inhibiting the expression of a target nucleic acid (e.g., a DNA or RNA such as a gene or its corresponding RNA), comprising (a) introducing one or more chemical modifications into the structure of a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved specificity. In

another embodiment, the chemical modification used to improve specificity comprises terminal cap modifications at the 5'-end, 3'-end, or both 5' and 3'-ends of the siNA molecule. The terminal cap modifications can comprise, for example, structures shown in **Figure 10** (e.g. inverted deoxyabasic moieties) or any other chemical modification
5 that renders a portion of the siNA molecule (e.g. the sense strand) incapable of mediating RNA interference against an off target nucleic acid sequence. In a non-limiting example, a siNA molecule is designed such that only the antisense sequence of the siNA molecule can serve as a guide sequence for RISC mediated degradation of a corresponding target RNA sequence. This can be accomplished by rendering the sense sequence of the siNA
10 inactive by introducing chemical modifications to the sense strand that preclude recognition of the sense strand as a guide sequence by RNAi machinery. In one embodiment, such chemical modifications comprise any chemical group at the 5'-end of the sense strand of the siNA, or any other group that serves to render the sense strand inactive as a guide sequence for mediating RNA interference. These modifications, for
15 example, can result in a molecule where the 5'-end of the sense strand no longer has a free 5'-hydroxyl (5'-OH) or a free 5'-phosphate group (e.g., phosphate, diphosphate, triphosphate, cyclic phosphate etc.). Non-limiting examples of such siNA constructs are described herein, such as “Stab 9/10”, “Stab 7/8”, “Stab 7/19” and “Stab 17/22” chemistries and variants thereof wherein the 5'-end and 3'-end of the sense strand of the
20 siNA do not comprise a hydroxyl group or phosphate group.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules of the invention with improved specificity for down regulating or inhibiting the expression of a target nucleic acid (e.g., a DNA or RNA such as a gene or its corresponding RNA), comprising introducing one or more chemical modifications into
25 the structure of a siNA molecule that prevent a strand or portion of the siNA molecule from acting as a template or guide sequence for RNAi activity. In one embodiment, the inactive strand or sense region of the siNA molecule is the sense strand or sense region of the siNA molecule, i.e. the strand or region of the siNA that does not have complementarity to the target nucleic acid sequence. In one embodiment, such chemical
30 modifications comprise any chemical group at the 5'-end of the sense strand or region of the siNA that does not comprise a 5'-hydroxyl (5'-OH) or 5'-phosphate group, or any other group that serves to render the sense strand or sense region inactive as a guide sequence for mediating RNA interference. Non-limiting examples of such siNA

constructs are described herein, such as “Stab 9/10”, “Stab 7/8”, “Stab 7/19” and “Stab 17/22” chemistries and variants thereof wherein the 5'-end and 3'-end of the sense strand of the siNA do not comprise a hydroxyl group or phosphate group.

In one embodiment, the invention features a method for screening siNA molecules
5 that are active in mediating RNA interference against a target nucleic acid sequence comprising (a) generating a plurality of unmodified siNA molecules, (b) screening the siNA molecules of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules that are active in mediating RNA interference against the target nucleic acid sequence, and (c) introducing chemical modifications (e.g. chemical modifications as described herein
10 or as otherwise known in the art) into the active siNA molecules of (b). In one embodiment, the method further comprises re-screening the chemically modified siNA molecules of step (c) under conditions suitable for isolating chemically modified siNA molecules that are active in mediating RNA interference against the target nucleic acid sequence.

15 In one embodiment, the invention features a method for screening chemically modified siNA molecules that are active in mediating RNA interference against a target nucleic acid sequence comprising (a) generating a plurality of chemically modified siNA molecules (e.g. siNA molecules as described herein or as otherwise known in the art), and (b) screening the siNA molecules of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating chemically modified siNA molecules that are active in mediating RNA interference against the target nucleic acid sequence.
20

The term “ligand” refers to any compound or molecule, such as a drug, peptide, hormone, or neurotransmitter, that is capable of interacting with another compound, such as a receptor, either directly or indirectly. The receptor that interacts with a ligand can be
25 present on the surface of a cell or can alternately be an intercellular receptor. Interaction of the ligand with the receptor can result in a biochemical reaction, or can simply be a physical interaction or association.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules of the invention with improved bioavailability comprising (a) introducing an excipient formulation to a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a)
30 under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved bioavailability.

Such excipients include polymers such as cyclodextrins, lipids, cationic lipids, polyamines, phospholipids, nanoparticles, receptors, ligands, and others.

In another embodiment, the invention features a method for generating siNA molecules of the invention with improved bioavailability comprising (a) introducing 5 nucleotides having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof into a siNA molecule, and (b) assaying the siNA molecule of step (a) under conditions suitable for isolating siNA molecules having improved bioavailability.

In another embodiment, polyethylene glycol (PEG) can be covalently attached to 10 siNA compounds of the present invention. The attached PEG can be any molecular weight, preferably from about 2,000 to about 50,000 daltons (Da).

The present invention can be used alone or as a component of a kit having at least one of the reagents necessary to carry out the *in vitro* or *in vivo* introduction of RNA to test samples and/or subjects. For example, preferred components of the kit include a 15 siNA molecule of the invention and a vehicle that promotes introduction of the siNA into cells of interest as described herein (e.g., using lipids and other methods of transfection known in the art, see for example Beigelman *et al.*, US 6,395,713). The kit can be used for target validation, such as in determining gene function and/or activity, or in drug optimization, and in drug discovery (see for example Usman *et al.*, USSN 60/402,996). Such a kit can also include instructions to allow a user of the kit to practice the invention.

20 The term "short interfering nucleic acid", "siNA", "short interfering RNA", "siRNA", "short interfering nucleic acid molecule", "short interfering oligonucleotide molecule", or "chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acid molecule" as used herein refers to any nucleic acid molecule capable of inhibiting or down regulating gene expression or viral replication, for example by mediating RNA interference "RNAi" or 25 gene silencing in a sequence-specific manner; see for example Bass, 2001, *Nature*, 411, 428-429; Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Nature*, 411, 494-498; and Kreutzer *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/44895; Zernicka-Goetz *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 01/36646; Fire, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/32619; Plaetinck *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/01846; Mello and Fire, 30 International PCT Publication No. WO 01/29058; Deschamps-Depaillette, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/07409; and Li *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO

00/44914; Allshire, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1818-1819; Volpe *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1833-1837; Jenuwein, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2215-2218; and Hall *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2232-2237; Hutvagner and Zamore, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2056-60; McManus *et al.*, 2002, *RNA*, 8, 842-850; Reinhart *et al.*, 2002, *Gene & Dev.*, 16, 1616-1626; and Reinhart & Bartel, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1831). Non limiting examples of siNA molecules of the invention are shown in **Figures 4-6, and Tables II, III, and IV** herein. For example the siNA can be a double-stranded polynucleotide molecule comprising self-complementary sense and antisense regions, wherein the antisense region comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence in a target nucleic acid molecule or a portion thereof and the sense region having nucleotide sequence corresponding to the target nucleic acid sequence or a portion thereof. The siNA can be assembled from two separate oligonucleotides, where one strand is the sense strand and the other is the antisense strand, wherein the antisense and sense strands are self-complementary (i.e. each strand comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence in the other strand; such as where the antisense strand and sense strand form a duplex or double stranded structure, for example wherein the double stranded region is about 19 base pairs); the antisense strand comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence in a target nucleic acid molecule or a portion thereof and the sense strand comprises nucleotide sequence corresponding to the target nucleic acid sequence or a portion thereof. Alternatively, the siNA is assembled from a single oligonucleotide, where the self-complementary sense and antisense regions of the siNA are linked by means of a nucleic acid based or non-nucleic acid-based linker(s). The siNA can be a polynucleotide with a duplex, asymmetric duplex, hairpin or asymmetric hairpin secondary structure, having self-complementary sense and antisense regions, wherein the antisense region comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence in a separate target nucleic acid molecule or a portion thereof and the sense region having nucleotide sequence corresponding to the target nucleic acid sequence or a portion thereof. The siNA can be a circular single-stranded polynucleotide having two or more loop structures and a stem comprising self-complementary sense and antisense regions, wherein the antisense region comprises nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence in a target nucleic acid molecule or a portion thereof and the sense region having nucleotide sequence corresponding to the target nucleic acid sequence or a portion thereof, and wherein the circular polynucleotide can

be processed either *in vivo* or *in vitro* to generate an active siNA molecule capable of mediating RNAi. The siNA can also comprise a single stranded polynucleotide having nucleotide sequence complementary to nucleotide sequence in a target nucleic acid molecule or a portion thereof (for example, where such siNA molecule does not require
5 the presence within the siNA molecule of nucleotide sequence corresponding to the target nucleic acid sequence or a portion thereof), wherein the single stranded polynucleotide can further comprise a terminal phosphate group, such as a 5'-phosphate (see for example Martinez *et al.*, 2002, *Cell.*, 110, 563-574 and Schwarz *et al.*, 2002,
10 *Molecular Cell*, 10, 537-568), or 5',3'-diphosphate. In certain embodiment, the siNA molecule of the invention comprises separate sense and antisense sequences or regions, wherein the sense and antisense regions are covalently linked by nucleotide or non-nucleotide linkers molecules as is known in the art, or are alternately non-covalently linked by ionic interactions, hydrogen bonding, van der waals interactions, hydrophobic intercations, and/or stacking interactions. In certain embodiments, the siNA molecules
15 of the invention comprise nucleotide sequence that is complementary to nucleotide sequence of a target gene. In another embodiment, the siNA molecule of the invention interacts with nucleotide sequence of a target gene in a manner that causes inhibition of expression of the target gene. As used herein, siNA molecules need not be limited to those molecules containing only RNA, but further encompasses chemically-modified
20 nucleotides and non-nucleotides. In certain embodiments, the short interfering nucleic acid molecules of the invention lack 2'-hydroxy (2'-OH) containing nucleotides. Applicant describes in certain embodiments short interfering nucleic acids that do not require the presence of nucleotides having a 2'-hydroxy group for mediating RNAi and as such, short interfering nucleic acid molecules of the invention optionally do not
25 include any ribonucleotides (e.g., nucleotides having a 2'-OH group). Such siNA molecules that do not require the presence of ribonucleotides within the siNA molecule to support RNAi can however have an attached linker or linkers or other attached or associated groups, moieties, or chains containing one or more nucleotides with 2'-OH groups. Optionally, siNA molecules can comprise ribonucleotides at about 5, 10, 20, 30,
30 40, or 50% of the nucleotide positions. The modified short interfering nucleic acid molecules of the invention can also be referred to as short interfering modified oligonucleotides "siMON." As used herein, the term siNA is meant to be equivalent to other terms used to describe nucleic acid molecules that are capable of mediating

sequence specific RNAi, for example short interfering RNA (siRNA), double-stranded RNA (dsRNA), micro-RNA (miRNA), short hairpin RNA (shRNA), short interfering oligonucleotide, short interfering nucleic acid, short interfering modified oligonucleotide, chemically-modified siRNA, post-transcriptional gene silencing RNA (ptgsRNA), and others. In addition, as used herein, the term RNAi is meant to be equivalent to other terms used to describe sequence specific RNA interference, such as post transcriptional gene silencing, translational inhibition, or epigenetics. For example, siNA molecules of the invention can be used to epigenetically silence genes at both the post-transcriptional level or the pre-transcriptional level. In a non-limiting example, epigenetic regulation of gene expression by siNA molecules of the invention can result from siNA mediated modification of chromatin structure to alter gene expression (see, for example, Allshire, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1818-1819; Volpe *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1833-1837; Jenuwein, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2215-2218; and Hall *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2232-2237).

By “asymmetric hairpin” as used herein is meant a linear siNA molecule comprising an antisense region, a loop portion that can comprise nucleotides or non-nucleotides, and a sense region that comprises fewer nucleotides than the antisense region to the extent that the sense region has enough complementary nucleotides to base pair with the antisense region and form a duplex with loop. For example, an asymmetric hairpin siNA molecule of the invention can comprise an antisense region having length sufficient to mediate RNAi in a cell or in vitro system (e.g. about 19 to about 22 (e.g., about 19, 20, 21, or 22) nucleotides) and a loop region comprising about 4 to about 8 (e.g., about 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8) nucleotides, and a sense region having about 3 to about 18 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18) nucleotides that are complementary to the antisense region. The asymmetric hairpin siNA molecule can also comprise a 5'-terminal phosphate group that can be chemically modified. The loop portion of the asymmetric hairpin siNA molecule can comprise nucleotides, non-nucleotides, linker molecules, or conjugate molecules as described herein.

By “asymmetric duplex” as used herein is meant a siNA molecule having two separate strands comprising a sense region and an antisense region, wherein the sense region comprises fewer nucleotides than the antisense region to the extent that the sense region has enough complementary nucleotides to base pair with the antisense region and form a duplex. For example, an asymmetric duplex siNA molecule of the invention can

comprise an antisense region having length sufficient to mediate RNAi in a cell or in vitro system (e.g. about 19 to about 22 (e.g. about 19, 20, 21, or 22) nucleotides) and a sense region having about 3 to about 18 (e.g., about 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18) nucleotides that are complementary to the antisense region.

5 By "modulate" is meant that the expression of the gene, or level of RNA molecule or equivalent RNA molecules encoding one or more proteins or protein subunits, or activity of one or more proteins or protein subunits is up regulated or down regulated, such that expression, level, or activity is greater than or less than that observed in the absence of the modulator. For example, the term "modulate" can mean "inhibit," but the
10 use of the word "modulate" is not limited to this definition.

By "inhibit", "down-regulate", or "reduce", it is meant that the expression of the gene, or level of RNA molecules or equivalent RNA molecules encoding one or more proteins or protein subunits, or activity of one or more proteins or protein subunits, is reduced below that observed in the absence of the nucleic acid molecules (e.g., siNA) of
15 the invention. In one embodiment, inhibition, down-regulation or reduction with an siNA molecule is below that level observed in the presence of an inactive or attenuated molecule. In another embodiment, inhibition, down-regulation, or reduction with siNA molecules is below that level observed in the presence of, for example, an siNA molecule with scrambled sequence or with mismatches. In another embodiment,
20 inhibition, down-regulation, or reduction of gene expression with a nucleic acid molecule of the instant invention is greater in the presence of the nucleic acid molecule than in its absence.

By "gene", or "target gene", is meant, a nucleic acid that encodes an RNA, for example, nucleic acid sequences including, but not limited to, structural genes encoding
25 a polypeptide. A gene or target gene can also encode a functional RNA (fRNA) or non-coding RNA (ncRNA), such as small temporal RNA (stRNA), micro RNA (miRNA), small nuclear RNA (snRNA), short interfering RNA (siRNA), small nucleolar RNA (snRNA), ribosomal RNA (rRNA), transfer RNA (tRNA) and precursor RNAs thereof. Such non-coding RNAs can serve as target nucleic acid molecules for siNA mediated
30 RNA interference in modulating the activity of fRNA or ncRNA involved in functional or regulatory cellular processes. Aberrant fRNA or ncRNA activity leading to disease

can therefore be modulated by siNA molecules of the invention. siNA molecules targeting fRNA and ncRNA can also be used to manipulate or alter the genotype or phenotype of an organism or cell, by intervening in cellular processes such as genetic imprinting, transcription, translation, or nucleic acid processing (e.g., transamination, 5 methylation etc.). The target gene can be a gene derived from a cell, an endogenous gene, a transgene, or exogenous genes such as genes of a pathogen, for example a virus, which is present in the cell after infection thereof. The cell containing the target gene can be derived from or contained in any organism, for example a plant, animal, protozoan, virus, bacterium, or fungus. Non-limiting examples of plants include 10 monocots, dicots, or gymnosperms. Non-limiting examples of animals include vertebrates or invertebrates. Non-limiting examples of fungi include molds or yeasts.

By "VEGF" as used herein is meant, any vascular endothelial growth factor (e.g., VEGF, VEGF-A, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, VEGF-D) protein, peptide, or polypeptide having vascular endothelial growth factor activity, such as encoded by VEGF Genbank 15 Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**. The term VEGF also refers to nucleic acid sequences encoding any vascular endothelial growth factor protein, peptide, or polypeptide having vascular endothelial growth factor activity.

By "VEGF-B" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_003377, having vascular 20 endothelial growth factor type B activity. The term VEGF-B also refers to nucleic acid sequences encoding any VEGF-B protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGF-B activity.

By "VEGF-C" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_005429, having vascular 25 endothelial growth factor type C activity. The term VEGF-C also refers to nucleic acid sequences encoding any VEGF-C protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGF-C activity.

By "VEGF-D" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_004469, having vascular 30 endothelial growth factor type D activity. The term VEGF-D also refers to nucleic acid

sequences encoding any VEGF-D protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGF-D activity.

By "VEGFr" as used herein is meant, any vascular endothelial growth factor receptor protein, peptide, or polypeptide (e.g., VEGFr1, VEGFr2, or VEGFr3, including 5 both membrane bound and/or soluble forms thereof) having vascular endothelial growth factor receptor activity, such as encoded by VEGFr Genbank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**. The term VEGFr also refers to nucleic acid sequences encoding any vascular endothelial growth factor receptor protein, peptide, or polypeptide having vascular endothelial growth factor receptor activity.

10 By "VEGFr1" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_002019, having vascular endothelial growth factor receptor type 1 (*flt*) activity, for example, having the ability to bind a vascular endothelial growth factor. The term VEGF1 also refers to nucleic acid sequences encoding any VEGFr1 protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGFr1 15 activity.

By "VEGFr2" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_002253, having vascular endothelial growth factor receptor type 2 (*kdr*) activity, for example, having the ability to bind a vascular endothelial growth factor. The term VEGF2 also refers to nucleic acid 20 sequences encoding any VEGFr2 protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGFr2 activity.

By "VEGFr3" is meant, protein, peptide, or polypeptide receptor or a derivative thereof, such as encoded by Genbank Accession No. NM_002020 having vascular endothelial growth factor receptor type 3 (*kdr*) activity, for example, having the ability to bind a vascular endothelial growth factor. The term VEGF3 also refers to nucleic acid 25 sequences encoding any VEGFr3 protein, peptide, or polypeptide having VEGFr3 activity.

By "homologous sequence" is meant, a nucleotide sequence that is shared by one or more polynucleotide sequences, such as genes, gene transcripts and/or non-coding 30 polynucleotides. For example, a homologous sequence can be a nucleotide sequence that

is shared by two or more genes encoding related but different proteins, such as different members of a gene family (e.g., VEGF receptors such as VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3), different protein epitopes, different protein isoforms (e.g., VEGF A, B, C, and/or D) or completely divergent genes, such as a cytokine and its corresponding 5 receptors (e.g., VEGF and VEGF receptors). A homologous sequence can be a nucleotide sequence that is shared by two or more non-coding polynucleotides, such as noncoding DNA or RNA, regulatory sequences, introns, and sites of transcriptional control or regulation. Homologous sequences can also include conserved sequence regions shared by more than one polynucleotide sequence. Homology does not need to 10 be perfect homology (e.g., 100%), as partially homologous sequences are also contemplated by the instant invention (e.g., 99%, 98%, 97%, 96%, 95%, 94%, 93%, 92%, 91%, 90%, 89%, 88%, 87%, 86%, 85%, 84%, 83%, 82%, 81%, 80% etc.).

15 By "conserved sequence region" is meant, a nucleotide sequence of one or more regions in a polynucleotide does not vary significantly between generations or from one biological system or organism to another biological system or organism. The polynucleotide can include both coding and non-coding DNA and RNA.

20 By "sense region" is meant a nucleotide sequence of a siNA molecule having complementarity to an antisense region of the siNA molecule. In addition, the sense region of a siNA molecule can comprise a nucleic acid sequence having homology with a target nucleic acid sequence.

By "antisense region" is meant a nucleotide sequence of a siNA molecule having complementarity to a target nucleic acid sequence. In addition, the antisense region of a siNA molecule can optionally comprise a nucleic acid sequence having complementarity to a sense region of the siNA molecule.

25 By "target nucleic acid" is meant any nucleic acid sequence whose expression or activity is to be modulated. The target nucleic acid can be DNA or RNA.

30 By "complementarity" is meant that a nucleic acid can form hydrogen bond(s) with another nucleic acid sequence by either traditional Watson-Crick or other non-traditional types. In reference to the nucleic molecules of the present invention, the binding free energy for a nucleic acid molecule with its complementary sequence is sufficient to

allow the relevant function of the nucleic acid to proceed, e.g., RNAi activity. Determination of binding free energies for nucleic acid molecules is well known in the art (see, e.g., Turner *et al.*, 1987, *CSH Symp. Quant. Biol.* LII pp.123-133; Frier *et al.*, 1986, *Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci. USA* 83:9373-9377; Turner *et al.*, 1987, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* 109:3783-3785). A percent complementarity indicates the percentage of contiguous residues in a nucleic acid molecule that can form hydrogen bonds (e.g., Watson-Crick base pairing) with a second nucleic acid sequence (e.g., 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 nucleotides out of a total of 10 nucleotides in the first oligonucleotide being based paired to a second nucleic acid sequence having 10 nucleotides represents 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, and 100% complementary respectively). "Perfectly complementary" means that all the contiguous residues of a nucleic acid sequence will hydrogen bond with the same number of contiguous residues in a second nucleic acid sequence.

The siRNA molecules of the invention represent a novel therapeutic approach to treat a variety of pathologic indications or other conditions, such as tumor angiogenesis and cancer, including but not limited to breast cancer, lung cancer (including non-small cell lung carcinoma), prostate cancer, colorectal cancer, brain cancer, esophageal cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, cervical cancer, head and neck cancer, skin cancers, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, liposarcoma, epithelial carcinoma, renal cell carcinoma, gallbladder adeno carcinoma, parotid adenocarcinoma, ovarian cancer, melanoma, lymphoma, glioma, endometrial sarcoma, multidrug resistant cancers, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, neovascular glaucoma, myopic degeneration, arthritis, psoriasis, endometriosis, female reproduction, verruca vulgaris, angiofibroma of tuberous sclerosis, pot-wine stains, Sturge Weber syndrome, Kippel-Trenaunay-Weber syndrome, Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome, renal disease such as Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD), and any other diseases or conditions that are related to or will respond to the levels of VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 in a cell or tissue, alone or in combination with other therapies. The reduction of VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 expression (specifically VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 gene RNA levels) and thus reduction in the level of the respective protein relieves, to some extent, the symptoms of the disease or condition.

In one embodiment of the present invention, each sequence of a siNA molecule of the invention is independently about 18 to about 24 nucleotides in length, in specific

embodiments about 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, or 24 nucleotides in length. In another embodiment, the siNA duplexes of the invention independently comprise about 17 to about 23 base pairs (e.g., about 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 or 23). In yet another embodiment, siNA molecules of the invention comprising hairpin or circular structures are about 35 to 5 about 55 (e.g., about 35, 40, 45, 50 or 55) nucleotides in length, or about 38 to about 44 (e.g., 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 or 44) nucleotides in length and comprising about 16 to about 22 (e.g., about 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 or 22) base pairs. Exemplary siNA molecules of the invention are shown in **Table II**. Exemplary synthetic siNA molecules of the invention are shown in **Tables III and IV** and/or **Figures 4-5**.

10 As used herein "cell" is used in its usual biological sense, and does not refer to an entire multicellular organism, e.g., specifically does not refer to a human. The cell can be present in an organism, e.g., birds, plants and mammals such as humans, cows, sheep, apes, monkeys, swine, dogs, and cats. The cell can be prokaryotic (e.g., bacterial cell) or eukaryotic (e.g., mammalian or plant cell). The cell can be of somatic or germ line 15 origin, totipotent or pluripotent, dividing or non-dividing. The cell can also be derived from or can comprise a gamete or embryo, a stem cell, or a fully differentiated cell.

20 The siNA molecules of the invention are added directly, or can be complexed with cationic lipids, packaged within liposomes, or otherwise delivered to target cells or tissues. The nucleic acid or nucleic acid complexes can be locally administered to relevant tissues *ex vivo*, or *in vivo* through injection, infusion pump or stent, with or without their incorporation in biopolymers. In particular embodiments, the nucleic acid molecules of the invention comprise sequences shown in **Tables II-III** and/or **Figures 4-5**. Examples of such nucleic acid molecules consist essentially of sequences defined in these tables and figures. Furthermore, the chemically modified constructs described in 25 **Table IV** can be applied to any siNA sequence of the invention.

In another aspect, the invention provides mammalian cells containing one or more siNA molecules of this invention. The one or more siNA molecules can independently be targeted to the same or different sites.

30 By "RNA" is meant a molecule comprising at least one ribonucleotide residue. By "ribonucleotide" is meant a nucleotide with a hydroxyl group at the 2' position of a β -D-ribo-furanose moiety. The terms include double-stranded RNA, single-stranded RNA,

isolated RNA such as partially purified RNA, essentially pure RNA, synthetic RNA, recombinantly produced RNA, as well as altered RNA that differs from naturally occurring RNA by the addition, deletion, substitution and/or alteration of one or more nucleotides. Such alterations can include addition of non-nucleotide material, such as to
5 the end(s) of the siRNA or internally, for example at one or more nucleotides of the RNA. Nucleotides in the RNA molecules of the instant invention can also comprise non-standard nucleotides, such as non-naturally occurring nucleotides or chemically synthesized nucleotides or deoxynucleotides. These altered RNAs can be referred to as analogs or analogs of naturally-occurring RNA.

10 By "subject" is meant an organism, which is a donor or recipient of explanted cells or the cells themselves. "Subject" also refers to an organism to which the nucleic acid molecules of the invention can be administered. A subject can be a mammal or mammalian cells, including a human or human cells.

15 The term "phosphorothioate" as used herein refers to an internucleotide linkage having Formula I, wherein Z and/or W comprise a sulfur atom. Hence, the term phosphorothioate refers to both phosphorothioate and phosphorodithioate internucleotide linkages.

The term "phosphonoacetate" as used herein refers to an internucleotide linkage having Formula I, wherein Z and/or W comprise an acetyl or protected acetyl group.

20 The term "thiophosphonoacetate" as used herein refers to an internucleotide linkage having Formula I, wherein Z comprises an acetyl or protected acetyl group and W comprises a sulfur atom or alternately W comprises an acetyl or protected acetyl group and Z comprises a sulfur atom.

25 The term "universal base" as used herein refers to nucleotide base analogs that form base pairs with each of the natural DNA/RNA bases with little discrimination between them. Non-limiting examples of universal bases include C-phenyl, C-naphthyl and other aromatic derivatives, inosine, azole carboxamides, and nitroazole derivatives such as 3-nitropyrrole, 4-nitroindole, 5-nitroindole, and 6-nitroindole as known in the art (see for example Loakes, 2001, *Nucleic Acids Research*, 29, 2437-2447).

The term "acyclic nucleotide" as used herein refers to any nucleotide having an acyclic ribose sugar, for example where any of the ribose carbons (C1, C2, C3, C4, or C5), are independently or in combination absent from the nucleotide.

5 The nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention, individually, or in combination or in conjunction with other drugs, can be used to treat diseases or conditions discussed herein (e.g., cancers and other proliferative conditions). For example, to treat a particular disease or condition, the siNA molecules can be administered to a subject or can be administered to other appropriate cells evident to those skilled in the art, individually or in combination with one or more drugs under conditions suitable for the treatment.

10 In a further embodiment, the siNA molecules can be used in combination with other known treatments to treat conditions or diseases discussed above. For example, the described molecules could be used in combination with one or more known therapeutic agents to treat a disease or condition. Non-limiting examples of other therapeutic agents that can be readily combined with a siNA molecule of the invention are enzymatic
15 nucleic acid molecules, allosteric nucleic acid molecules, antisense, decoy, or aptamer nucleic acid molecules, antibodies such as monoclonal antibodies, small molecules, and other organic and/or inorganic compounds including metals, salts and ions.

20 In one embodiment, the invention features an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one siNA molecule of the invention, in a manner which allows expression of the siNA molecule. For example, the vector can contain sequence(s) encoding both strands of a siNA molecule comprising a duplex. The vector can also contain sequence(s) encoding a single nucleic acid molecule that is self-complementary and thus forms a siNA molecule. Non-limiting examples of such expression vectors are described in Paul *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 505;
25 Miyagishi and Taira, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 497; Lee *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 500; and Novina *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Medicine*, advance online publication doi:10.1038/nm725.

In another embodiment, the invention features a mammalian cell, for example, a human cell, including an expression vector of the invention.

In yet another embodiment, the expression vector of the invention comprises a sequence for a siNA molecule having complementarity to a RNA molecule referred to by a Genbank Accession numbers, for example Genbank Accession Nos. shown in **Table I**.

5 In one embodiment, an expression vector of the invention comprises a nucleic acid sequence encoding two or more siNA molecules, which can be the same or different.

In another aspect of the invention, siNA molecules that interact with target RNA molecules and down-regulate gene encoding target RNA molecules (for example target RNA molecules referred to by Genbank Accession numbers herein) are expressed from transcription units inserted into DNA or RNA vectors. The recombinant vectors can be 10 DNA plasmids or viral vectors. siNA expressing viral vectors can be constructed based on, but not limited to, adeno-associated virus, retrovirus, adenovirus, or alphavirus. The recombinant vectors capable of expressing the siNA molecules can be delivered as described herein, and persist in target cells. Alternatively, viral vectors can be used that provide for transient expression of siNA molecules. Such vectors can be repeatedly 15 administered as necessary. Once expressed, the siNA molecules bind and down-regulate gene function or expression via RNA interference (RNAi). Delivery of siNA expressing vectors can be systemic, such as by intravenous or intramuscular administration, by administration to target cells ex-planted from a subject followed by reintroduction into the subject, or by any other means that would allow for introduction into the desired 20 target cell.

By "vectors" is meant any nucleic acid- and/or viral-based technique used to deliver a desired nucleic acid.

Other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments thereof, and from the claims.

25

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows a non-limiting example of a scheme for the synthesis of siNA molecules. The complementary siNA sequence strands, strand 1 and strand 2, are synthesized in tandem and are connected by a cleavable linkage, such as a nucleotide succinate or abasic succinate, which can be the same or different from the cleavable 30 linker used for solid phase synthesis on a solid support. The synthesis can be either solid

phase or solution phase, in the example shown, the synthesis is a solid phase synthesis. The synthesis is performed such that a protecting group, such as a dimethoxytrityl group, remains intact on the terminal nucleotide of the tandem oligonucleotide. Upon cleavage and deprotection of the oligonucleotide, the two siNA strands spontaneously hybridize to 5 form a siNA duplex, which allows the purification of the duplex by utilizing the properties of the terminal protecting group, for example by applying a trityl on purification method wherein only duplexes/oligonucleotides with the terminal protecting group are isolated.

Figure 2 shows a MALDI-TOF mass spectrum of a purified siNA duplex 10 synthesized by a method of the invention. The two peaks shown correspond to the predicted mass of the separate siNA sequence strands. This result demonstrates that the siNA duplex generated from tandem synthesis can be purified as a single entity using a simple trityl-on purification methodology.

Figure 3 shows a non-limiting proposed mechanistic representation of target RNA 15 degradation involved in RNAi. Double-stranded RNA (dsRNA), which is generated by RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRP) from foreign single-stranded RNA, for example viral, transposon, or other exogenous RNA, activates the DICER enzyme that in turn generates siNA duplexes. Alternately, synthetic or expressed siNA can be introduced directly into a cell by appropriate means. An active siNA complex forms 20 which recognizes a target RNA, resulting in degradation of the target RNA by the RISC endonuclease complex or in the synthesis of additional RNA by RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRP), which can activate DICER and result in additional siNA molecules, thereby amplifying the RNAi response.

Figure 4A-F shows non-limiting examples of chemically-modified siNA 25 constructs of the present invention. In the figure, N stands for any nucleotide (adenosine, guanosine, cytosine, uridine, or optionally thymidine, for example thymidine can be substituted in the overhanging regions designated by parenthesis (N N). Various modifications are shown for the sense and antisense strands of the siNA constructs.

Figure 4A: The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides wherein the two terminal 30 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and wherein all nucleotides present are ribonucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides,

deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. The antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, and wherein all nucleotides present are ribonucleotides except for 5 (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as "s" connects the (N N) nucleotides in the antisense strand.

10 **Figure 4B:** The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-O-methyl modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical 15 modifications described herein. The antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety and wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-O-methyl modified nucleotides except for 20 (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as "s" connects the (N N) nucleotides in the sense and antisense strand.

25 **Figure 4C:** The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides having 5'- and 3'- terminal cap moieties wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-O-methyl or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications 30 described herein. The antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety and wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that

may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as "s" connects the (N N) nucleotides in the antisense strand.

Figure 4D: The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides having 5'- and 3'- terminal cap moieties wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein and wherein and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy nucleotides. The antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety and wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-O-methyl modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as "s" connects the (N N) nucleotides in the antisense strand.

Figure 4E: The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides having 5'- and 3'- terminal cap moieties wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. The antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety and wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-O-methyl modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate,

phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as “s” connects the (N N) nucleotides in the antisense strand.

Figure 4F: The sense strand comprises 21 nucleotides having 5'- and 3'- terminal cap moieties wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally base paired and 5 wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein and wherein and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy nucleotides. The 10 antisense strand comprises 21 nucleotides, optionally having a 3'-terminal glyceryl moiety and wherein the two terminal 3'-nucleotides are optionally complementary to the target RNA sequence, and having one 3'-terminal phosphorothioate internucleotide linkage and wherein all pyrimidine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro modified nucleotides and all purine nucleotides that may be present are 2'-deoxy nucleotides except for (N N) nucleotides, which can comprise ribonucleotides, 15 deoxynucleotides, universal bases, or other chemical modifications described herein. A modified internucleotide linkage, such as a phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or other modified internucleotide linkage as described herein, shown as “s” connects the (N N) nucleotides in the antisense strand. The antisense strand of constructs A-F comprise sequence complementary to any target nucleic acid sequence of the invention. 20 Furthermore, when a glyceryl moiety (L) is present at the 3'-end of the antisense strand for any construct shown in Figure 4 A-F, the modified internucleotide linkage is optional.

Figure 5A-F shows non-limiting examples of specific chemically-modified siNA sequences of the invention. **A-F** applies the chemical modifications described in **Figure 25 4A-F** to a VEGF siNA sequence. Such chemical modifications can be applied to any sequence herein, such as any VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2, or VEGFr3 sequence.

Figure 6 shows non-limiting examples of different siNA constructs of the invention. The examples shown (constructs 1, 2, and 3) have 19 representative base pairs; however, different embodiments of the invention include any number of base pairs 30 described herein. Bracketed regions represent nucleotide overhangs, for example comprising about 1, 2, 3, or 4 nucleotides in length, preferably about 2 nucleotides.

Constructs 1 and 2 can be used independently for RNAi activity. Construct 2 can comprise a polynucleotide or non-nucleotide linker, which can optionally be designed as a biodegradable linker. In one embodiment, the loop structure shown in construct 2 can comprise a biodegradable linker that results in the formation of construct 1 *in vivo* and/or 5 *in vitro*. In another example, construct 3 can be used to generate construct 2 under the same principle wherein a linker is used to generate the active siNA construct 2 *in vivo* and/or *in vitro*, which can optionally utilize another biodegradable linker to generate the active siNA construct 1 *in vivo* and/or *in vitro*. As such, the stability and/or activity of the siNA constructs can be modulated based on the design of the siNA construct for use 10 *in vivo* or *in vitro* and/or *in vitro*.

Figure 7A-C is a diagrammatic representation of a scheme utilized in generating an expression cassette to generate siNA hairpin constructs.

Figure 7A: A DNA oligomer is synthesized with a 5'-restriction site (R1) sequence followed by a region having sequence identical (sense region of siNA) to a predetermined VEGF and/or VEGFr target sequence, wherein the sense region comprises, for example, about 19, 20, 21, or 22 nucleotides (N) in length, which is followed by a loop sequence of defined sequence (X), comprising, for example, about 3 to about 10 nucleotides. 15

Figure 7B: The synthetic construct is then extended by DNA polymerase to 20 generate a hairpin structure having self-complementary sequence that will result in a siNA transcript having specificity for a VEGF and/or VEGFr target sequence and having self-complementary sense and antisense regions.

Figure 7C: The construct is heated (for example to about 95°C) to linearize the 25 sequence, thus allowing extension of a complementary second DNA strand using a primer to the 3'-restriction sequence of the first strand. The double-stranded DNA is then inserted into an appropriate vector for expression in cells. The construct can be designed such that a 3'-terminal nucleotide overhang results from the transcription, for example by engineering restriction sites and/or utilizing a poly-U termination region as described in Paul *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 29, 505-508.

Figure 8A-C is a diagrammatic representation of a scheme utilized in generating an expression cassette to generate double-stranded siNA constructs.

5 **Figure 8A:** A DNA oligomer is synthesized with a 5'-restriction (R1) site sequence followed by a region having sequence identical (sense region of siNA) to a predetermined VEGF and/or VEGFr target sequence, wherein the sense region comprises, for example, about 19, 20, 21, or 22 nucleotides (N) in length, and which is followed by a 3'-restriction site (R2) which is adjacent to a loop sequence of defined sequence (X).

10 **Figure 8B:** The synthetic construct is then extended by DNA polymerase to generate a hairpin structure having self-complementary sequence.

15 **Figure 8C:** The construct is processed by restriction enzymes specific to R1 and R2 to generate a double-stranded DNA which is then inserted into an appropriate vector for expression in cells. The transcription cassette is designed such that a U6 promoter region flanks each side of the dsDNA which generates the separate sense and antisense strands of the siNA. Poly T termination sequences can be added to the constructs to generate U overhangs in the resulting transcript.

Figure 9A-E is a diagrammatic representation of a method used to determine target sites for siNA mediated RNAi within a particular target nucleic acid sequence, such as messenger RNA.

20 **Figure 9A:** A pool of siNA oligonucleotides are synthesized wherein the antisense region of the siNA constructs has complementarity to target sites across the target nucleic acid sequence, and wherein the sense region comprises sequence complementary to the antisense region of the siNA.

25 **Figure 9B&C:** (**Figure 9B**) The sequences are pooled and are inserted into vectors such that (**Figure 9C**) transfection of a vector into cells results in the expression of the siNA.

Figure 9D: Cells are sorted based on phenotypic change that is associated with modulation of the target nucleic acid sequence.

Figure 9E: The siNA is isolated from the sorted cells and is sequenced to identify efficacious target sites within the target nucleic acid sequence.

5 **Figure 10** shows non-limiting examples of different stabilization chemistries (1-10) that can be used, for example, to stabilize the 3'-end of siNA sequences of the invention, including (1) [3'-3']-inverted deoxyribose; (2) deoxyribonucleotide; (3) [5'-3']-3'-deoxyribonucleotide; (4) [5'-3']-ribonucleotide; (5) [5'-3']-3'-O-methyl ribonucleotide; (6) 3'-glyceryl; (7) [3'-5']-3'-deoxyribonucleotide; (8) [3'-3']-deoxyribonucleotide; (9) [5'-2']-deoxyribonucleotide; and (10) [5-3']-dideoxyribonucleotide. In addition to modified and unmodified backbone chemistries indicated in the figure, these chemistries can be 10 combined with different backbone modifications as described herein, for example, backbone modifications having Formula I. In addition, the 2'-deoxy nucleotide shown 5' to the terminal modifications shown can be another modified or unmodified nucleotide or non-nucleotide described herein, for example modifications having any of Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof.

15 **Figure 11** shows a non-limiting example of a strategy used to identify chemically modified siNA constructs of the invention that are nuclease resistance while preserving the ability to mediate RNAi activity. Chemical modifications are introduced into the siNA construct based on educated design parameters (e.g. introducing 2'-modifications, base modifications, backbone modifications, terminal cap modifications etc). The 20 modified construct is tested in an appropriate system (e.g. human serum for nuclease resistance, shown, or an animal model for PK/delivery parameters). In parallel, the siNA construct is tested for RNAi activity, for example in a cell culture system such as a luciferase reporter assay). Lead siNA constructs are then identified which possess a particular characteristic while maintaining RNAi activity, and can be further modified 25 and assayed once again. This same approach can be used to identify siNA-conjugate molecules with improved pharmacokinetic profiles, delivery, and RNAi activity.

Figure 12 shows non-limiting examples of phosphorylated siNA molecules of the invention, including linear and duplex constructs and asymmetric derivatives thereof.

30 **Figure 13** shows non-limiting examples of chemically modified terminal phosphate groups of the invention.

Figure 14 shows non-limiting examples of reduction of VEGF mRNA levels in HELA cells (5,000 cells/well) 24 hours after treatment with siNA molecules targeting VEGF RNA sequences. HELA cells were transfected with 0.25 ug/well of lipid complexed with 25 nM siNA. Activity of the siNA molecules is shown compared to matched chemistry inverted siNA controls, untreated cells, and cells treated with lipid only (transfection control). siNA molecules and controls are referred to by compound numbers (sense/antisense), see **Table III** for sequences. **Figure 14A** shows data for Stab 0/0 and Stab 9/10 siNA constructs with appropriate controls. **Figure 14B** shows data for Stab 7/8 siNA constructs with appropriate controls. As shown in the figures, the siNA constructs that target VEGF sequences demonstrate potent efficacy in inhibiting VEGF RNA expression in cell culture experiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Mechanism of action of Nucleic Acid Molecules of the Invention

The discussion that follows discusses the proposed mechanism of RNA interference mediated by short interfering RNA as is presently known, and is not meant to be limiting and is not an admission of prior art. Applicant demonstrates herein that chemically-modified short interfering nucleic acids possess similar or improved capacity to mediate RNAi as do siRNA molecules and are expected to possess improved stability and activity *in vivo*; therefore, this discussion is not meant to be limiting only to siRNA and can be applied to siNA as a whole. By "improved capacity to mediate RNAi" or "improved RNAi activity" is meant to include RNAi activity measured *in vitro* and/or *in vivo* where the RNAi activity is a reflection of both the ability of the siNA to mediate RNAi and the stability of the siNAs of the invention. In this invention, the product of these activities can be increased *in vitro* and/or *in vivo* compared to an all RNA siRNA or a siNA containing a plurality of ribonucleotides. In some cases, the activity or stability of the siNA molecule can be decreased (i.e., less than ten-fold), but the overall activity of the siNA molecule is enhanced *in vitro* and/or *in vivo*.

RNA interference refers to the process of sequence specific post-transcriptional gene silencing in animals mediated by short interfering RNAs (siRNAs) (Fire *et al.*, 1998, *Nature*, 391, 806). The corresponding process in plants is commonly referred to as post-transcriptional gene silencing or RNA silencing and is also referred to as quelling in

fungi. The process of post-transcriptional gene silencing is thought to be an evolutionarily-conserved cellular defense mechanism used to prevent the expression of foreign genes which is commonly shared by diverse flora and phyla (Fire *et al.*, 1999, *Trends Genet.*, 15, 358). Such protection from foreign gene expression may have 5 evolved in response to the production of double-stranded RNAs (dsRNAs) derived from viral infection or the random integration of transposon elements into a host genome via a cellular response that specifically destroys homologous single-stranded RNA or viral genomic RNA. The presence of dsRNA in cells triggers the RNAi response though a mechanism that has yet to be fully characterized. This mechanism appears to be 10 different from the interferon response that results from dsRNA-mediated activation of protein kinase PKR and 2', 5'-oligoadenylate synthetase resulting in non-specific cleavage of mRNA by ribonuclease L.

The presence of long dsRNAs in cells stimulates the activity of a ribonuclease III enzyme referred to as Dicer. Dicer is involved in the processing of the dsRNA into short 15 pieces of dsRNA known as short interfering RNAs (siRNAs) (Berstein *et al.*, 2001, *Nature*, 409, 363). Short interfering RNAs derived from Dicer activity are typically about 21 to about 23 nucleotides in length and comprise about 19 base pair duplexes. Dicer has also been implicated in the excision of 21- and 22-nucleotide small temporal 20 RNAs (stRNAs) from precursor RNA of conserved structure that are implicated in translational control (Hutvagner *et al.*, 2001, *Science*, 293, 834). The RNAi response also features an endonuclease complex containing a siRNA, commonly referred to as an RNA-induced silencing complex (RISC), which mediates cleavage of single-stranded 25 RNA having sequence homologous to the siRNA. Cleavage of the target RNA takes place in the middle of the region complementary to the guide sequence of the siRNA duplex (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Genes Dev.*, 15, 188). In addition, RNA interference can also involve small RNA (e.g., micro-RNA or miRNA) mediated gene silencing, presumably through cellular mechanisms that regulate chromatin structure and thereby 30 prevent transcription of target gene sequences (see for example Allshire, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1818-1819; Volpe *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 1833-1837; Jenuwein, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2215-2218; and Hall *et al.*, 2002, *Science*, 297, 2232-2237). As such, siNA molecules of the invention can be used to mediate gene silencing via interaction with RNA transcripts or alternately by interaction with particular gene sequences, wherein

such interaction results in gene silencing either at the transcriptional level or post-transcriptional level.

RNAi has been studied in a variety of systems. Fire *et al.*, 1998, *Nature*, 391, 806, were the first to observe RNAi in *C. elegans*. Wianny and Goetz, 1999, *Nature Cell Biol.*, 2, 70, describe RNAi mediated by dsRNA in mouse embryos. Hammond *et al.*, 2000, *Nature*, 404, 293, describe RNAi in *Drosophila* cells transfected with dsRNA. Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *Nature*, 411, 494, describe RNAi induced by introduction of duplexes of synthetic 21-nucleotide RNAs in cultured mammalian cells including human embryonic kidney and HeLa cells. Recent work in *Drosophila* embryonic lysates has revealed certain requirements for siRNA length, structure, chemical composition, and sequence that are essential to mediate efficient RNAi activity. These studies have shown that 21 nucleotide siRNA duplexes are most active when containing two 2-nucleotide 3'-terminal nucleotide overhangs. Furthermore, substitution of one or both siRNA strands with 2'-deoxy or 2'-O-methyl nucleotides abolishes RNAi activity, whereas substitution of 3'-terminal siRNA nucleotides with deoxy nucleotides was shown to be tolerated. Mismatch sequences in the center of the siRNA duplex were also shown to abolish RNAi activity. In addition, these studies also indicate that the position of the cleavage site in the target RNA is defined by the 5'-end of the siRNA guide sequence rather than the 3'-end (Elbashir *et al.*, 2001, *EMBO J.*, 20, 6877). Other studies have indicated that a 5'-phosphate on the target-complementary strand of a siRNA duplex is required for siRNA activity and that ATP is utilized to maintain the 5'-phosphate moiety on the siRNA (Nykanen *et al.*, 2001, *Cell*, 107, 309); however, siRNA molecules lacking a 5'-phosphate are active when introduced exogenously, suggesting that 5'-phosphorylation of siRNA constructs may occur *in vivo*.

25 Synthesis of Nucleic acid Molecules

Synthesis of nucleic acids greater than 100 nucleotides in length is difficult using automated methods, and the therapeutic cost of such molecules is prohibitive. In this invention, small nucleic acid motifs ("small" refers to nucleic acid motifs no more than 100 nucleotides in length, preferably no more than 80 nucleotides in length, and most preferably no more than 50 nucleotides in length; *e.g.*, individual siNA oligonucleotide sequences or siNA sequences synthesized in tandem) are preferably used for exogenous delivery. The simple structure of these molecules increases the ability of the nucleic acid

to invade targeted regions of protein and/or RNA structure. Exemplary molecules of the instant invention are chemically synthesized, and others can similarly be synthesized.

Oligonucleotides (*e.g.*, certain modified oligonucleotides or portions of oligonucleotides lacking ribonucleotides) are synthesized using protocols known in the art, for example as described in Caruthers *et al.*, 1992, *Methods in Enzymology* 211, 3-19, Thompson *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/54459, Wincott *et al.*, 1995, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 23, 2677-2684, Wincott *et al.*, 1997, *Methods Mol. Bio.*, 74, 59, Brennan *et al.*, 1998, *Biotechnol Bioeng.*, 61, 33-45, and Brennan, U.S. Pat. No. 6,001,311. All of these references are incorporated herein by reference. The synthesis of oligonucleotides makes use of common nucleic acid protecting and coupling groups, such as dimethoxytrityl at the 5'-end, and phosphoramidites at the 3'-end. In a non-limiting example, small scale syntheses are conducted on a 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. synthesizer using a 0.2 μ mol scale protocol with a 2.5 min coupling step for 2'-O-methylated nucleotides and a 45 second coupling step for 2'-deoxy nucleotides or 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides. **Table V** outlines the amounts and the contact times of the reagents used in the synthesis cycle. Alternatively, syntheses at the 0.2 μ mol scale can be performed on a 96-well plate synthesizer, such as the instrument produced by Protogene (Palo Alto, CA) with minimal modification to the cycle. A 33-fold excess (60 μ L of 0.11 M = 6.6 μ mol) of 2'-O-methyl phosphoramidite and a 105-fold excess of S-ethyl tetrazole (60 μ L of 0.25 M = 15 μ mol) can be used in each coupling cycle of 2'-O-methyl residues relative to polymer-bound 5'-hydroxyl. A 22-fold excess (40 μ L of 0.11 M = 4.4 μ mol) of deoxy phosphoramidite and a 70-fold excess of S-ethyl tetrazole (40 μ L of 0.25 M = 10 μ mol) can be used in each coupling cycle of deoxy residues relative to polymer-bound 5'-hydroxyl. Average coupling yields on the 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. synthesizer, determined by colorimetric quantitation of the trityl fractions, are typically 97.5-99%. Other oligonucleotide synthesis reagents for the 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. synthesizer include the following: detritylation solution is 3% TCA in methylene chloride (ABI); capping is performed with 16% *N*-methyl imidazole in THF (ABI) and 10% acetic anhydride/10% 2,6-lutidine in THF (ABI); and oxidation solution is 16.9 mM I₂, 49 mM pyridine, 9% water in THF (PERSEPTIVE™). Burdick & Jackson Synthesis Grade acetonitrile is used directly from the reagent bottle. S-Ethyltetrazole solution (0.25 M in acetonitrile) is made up from the solid obtained from

American International Chemical, Inc. Alternately, for the introduction of phosphorothioate linkages, Beaucage reagent (3H-1,2-Benzodithiol-3-one 1,1-dioxide, 0.05 M in acetonitrile) is used.

Deprotection of the DNA-based oligonucleotides is performed as follows: the 5 polymer-bound trityl-on oligoribonucleotide is transferred to a 4 mL glass screw top vial and suspended in a solution of 40% aqueous methylamine (1 mL) at 65 °C for 10 minutes. After cooling to –20 °C, the supernatant is removed from the polymer support. The support is washed three times with 1.0 mL of EtOH:MeCN:H₂O/3:1:1, vortexed and the supernatant is then added to the first supernatant. The combined supernatants, 10 containing the oligoribonucleotide, are dried to a white powder.

The method of synthesis used for RNA including certain siNA molecules of the invention follows the procedure as described in Usman *et al.*, 1987, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 109, 7845; Scaringe *et al.*, 1990, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 18, 5433; and Wincott *et al.*, 1995, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 23, 2677-2684 Wincott *et al.*, 1997, *Methods Mol. Bio.*, 74, 59, and 15 makes use of common nucleic acid protecting and coupling groups, such as dimethoxytrityl at the 5'-end, and phosphoramidites at the 3'-end. In a non-limiting example, small scale syntheses are conducted on a 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. synthesizer using a 0.2 μmol scale protocol with a 7.5 min coupling step for alkylsilyl protected nucleotides and a 2.5 min coupling step for 2'-O-methylated nucleotides. 20 **Table V** outlines the amounts and the contact times of the reagents used in the synthesis cycle. Alternatively, syntheses at the 0.2 μmol scale can be done on a 96-well plate synthesizer, such as the instrument produced by Protogene (Palo Alto, CA) with minimal modification to the cycle. A 33-fold excess (60 μL of 0.11 M = 6.6 μmol) of 2'-O-methyl phosphoramidite and a 75-fold excess of S-ethyl tetrazole (60 μL of 0.25 M = 15 25 μmol) can be used in each coupling cycle of 2'-O-methyl residues relative to polymer-bound 5'-hydroxyl. A 66-fold excess (120 μL of 0.11 M = 13.2 μmol) of alkylsilyl (ribo) protected phosphoramidite and a 150-fold excess of S-ethyl tetrazole (120 μL of 0.25 M = 30 μmol) can be used in each coupling cycle of ribo residues relative to polymer-bound 5'-hydroxyl. Average coupling yields on the 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. 30 synthesizer, determined by colorimetric quantitation of the trityl fractions, are typically 97.5-99%. Other oligonucleotide synthesis reagents for the 394 Applied Biosystems, Inc. synthesizer include the following: detritylation solution is 3% TCA in methylene

chloride (ABI); capping is performed with 16% *N*-methyl imidazole in THF (ABI) and 10% acetic anhydride/10% 2,6-lutidine in THF (ABI); oxidation solution is 16.9 mM I₂, 49 mM pyridine, 9% water in THF (PERSEPTIVE™). Burdick & Jackson Synthesis Grade acetonitrile is used directly from the reagent bottle. S-Ethyltetrazole solution (0.25 M in acetonitrile) is made up from the solid obtained from American International Chemical, Inc. Alternately, for the introduction of phosphorothioate linkages, Beaucage reagent (3H-1,2-Benzodithiol-3-one 1,1-dioxide 0.05 M in acetonitrile) is used.

Deprotection of the RNA is performed using either a two-pot or one-pot protocol. For the two-pot protocol, the polymer-bound trityl-on oligoribonucleotide is transferred 10 to a 4 mL glass screw top vial and suspended in a solution of 40% aq. methylamine (1 mL) at 65 °C for 10 min. After cooling to –20 °C, the supernatant is removed from the polymer support. The support is washed three times with 1.0 mL of EtOH:MeCN:H₂O/3:1:1, vortexed and the supernatant is then added to the first supernatant. The combined supernatants, containing the oligoribonucleotide, are dried to 15 a white powder. The base deprotected oligoribonucleotide is resuspended in anhydrous TEA/HF/NMP solution (300 μL of a solution of 1.5 mL N-methylpyrrolidinone, 750 μL TEA and 1 mL TEA•3HF to provide a 1.4 M HF concentration) and heated to 65 °C. After 1.5 h, the oligomer is quenched with 1.5 M NH₄HCO₃.

Alternatively, for the one-pot protocol, the polymer-bound trityl-on 20 oligoribonucleotide is transferred to a 4 mL glass screw top vial and suspended in a solution of 33% ethanolic methylamine/DMSO: 1/1 (0.8 mL) at 65 °C for 15 minutes. The vial is brought to room temperature TEA•3HF (0.1 mL) is added and the vial is heated at 65 °C for 15 minutes. The sample is cooled at –20 °C and then quenched with 1.5 M NH₄HCO₃.

For purification of the trityl-on oligomers, the quenched NH₄HCO₃ solution is 25 loaded onto a C-18 containing cartridge that had been prewashed with acetonitrile followed by 50 mM TEAA. After washing the loaded cartridge with water, the RNA is detritylated with 0.5% TFA for 13 minutes. The cartridge is then washed again with water, salt exchanged with 1 M NaCl and washed with water again. The oligonucleotide 30 is then eluted with 30% acetonitrile.

The average stepwise coupling yields are typically >98% (Wincott *et al.*, 1995 *Nucleic Acids Res.* 23, 2677-2684). Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the scale of synthesis can be adapted to be larger or smaller than the example described above including but not limited to 96-well format.

5 Alternatively, the nucleic acid molecules of the present invention can be synthesized separately and joined together post-synthetically, for example, by ligation (Moore *et al.*, 1992, *Science* 256, 9923; Draper *et al.*, International PCT publication No. WO 93/23569; Shabarova *et al.*, 1991, *Nucleic Acids Research* 19, 4247; Bellon *et al.*, 1997, *Nucleosides & Nucleotides*, 16, 951; Bellon *et al.*, 1997, *Bioconjugate Chem.* 8, 10 204), or by hybridization following synthesis and/or deprotection.

15 The siNA molecules of the invention can also be synthesized via a tandem synthesis methodology as described in Example 1 herein, wherein both siNA strands are synthesized as a single contiguous oligonucleotide fragment or strand separated by a cleavable linker which is subsequently cleaved to provide separate siNA fragments or 20 strands that hybridize and permit purification of the siNA duplex. The linker can be a polynucleotide linker or a non-nucleotide linker. The tandem synthesis of siNA as described herein can be readily adapted to both multiwell/multiplate synthesis platforms such as 96 well or similarly larger multi-well platforms. The tandem synthesis of siNA as described herein can also be readily adapted to large scale synthesis platforms employing batch reactors, synthesis columns and the like.

A siNA molecule can also be assembled from two distinct nucleic acid strands or fragments wherein one fragment includes the sense region and the second fragment includes the antisense region of the RNA molecule.

25 The nucleic acid molecules of the present invention can be modified extensively to enhance stability by modification with nuclease resistant groups, for example, 2'-amino, 2'-C-allyl, 2'-fluoro, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-H (for a review see Usman and Cedergren, 1992, *TIBS* 17, 34; Usman *et al.*, 1994, *Nucleic Acids Symp. Ser.* 31, 163). siNA constructs can be purified by gel electrophoresis using general methods or can be purified by high pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC; see Wincott *et al.*, *supra*, the totality of which is 30 hereby incorporated herein by reference) and re-suspended in water.

In another aspect of the invention, siNA molecules of the invention are expressed from transcription units inserted into DNA or RNA vectors. The recombinant vectors can be DNA plasmids or viral vectors. siNA expressing viral vectors can be constructed based on, but not limited to, adeno-associated virus, retrovirus, adenovirus, or alphavirus.

5 The recombinant vectors capable of expressing the siNA molecules can be delivered as described herein, and persist in target cells. Alternatively, viral vectors can be used that provide for transient expression of siNA molecules.

Optimizing Activity of the nucleic acid molecule of the invention.

Chemically synthesizing nucleic acid molecules with modifications (base, sugar and/or phosphate) can prevent their degradation by serum ribonucleases, which can increase their potency (see e.g., Eckstein *et al.*, International Publication No. WO 10 92/07065; Perrault *et al.*, 1990 *Nature* 344, 565; Pieken *et al.*, 1991, *Science* 253, 314; Usman and Cedergren, 1992, *Trends in Biochem. Sci.* 17, 334; Usman *et al.*, International Publication No. WO 93/15187; and Rossi *et al.*, International Publication 15 No. WO 91/03162; Sproat, U.S. Pat. No. 5,334,711; Gold *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 6,300,074; and Burgin *et al.*, *supra*; all of which are incorporated by reference herein). All of the above references describe various chemical modifications that can be made to the base, phosphate and/or sugar moieties of the nucleic acid molecules described herein. Modifications that enhance their efficacy in cells, and removal of bases from nucleic acid 20 molecules to shorten oligonucleotide synthesis times and reduce chemical requirements are desired.

There are several examples in the art describing sugar, base and phosphate modifications that can be introduced into nucleic acid molecules with significant enhancement in their nuclease stability and efficacy. For example, oligonucleotides are 25 modified to enhance stability and/or enhance biological activity by modification with nuclease resistant groups, for example, 2'-amino, 2'-C-allyl, 2'-fluoro, 2'-O-methyl, 2'-O-allyl, 2'-H, nucleotide base modifications (for a review see Usman and Cedergren, 1992, *TIBS*. 17, 34; Usman *et al.*, 1994, *Nucleic Acids Symp. Ser.* 31, 163; Burgin *et al.*, 1996, *Biochemistry*, 35, 14090). Sugar modification of nucleic acid molecules have been 30 extensively described in the art (see Eckstein *et al.*, International Publication PCT No. WO 92/07065; Perrault *et al.* *Nature*, 1990, 344, 565-568; Pieken *et al.* *Science*, 1991, 253, 314-317; Usman and Cedergren, *Trends in Biochem. Sci.*, 1992, 17, 334-339;

Usman *et al.* International Publication PCT No. WO 93/15187; Sproat, U.S. Pat. No. 5,334,711 and Beigelman *et al.*, 1995, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 270, 25702; Beigelman *et al.*, International PCT publication No. WO 97/26270; Beigelman *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,716,824; Usman *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,627,053; Woolf *et al.*, International PCT 5 Publication No. WO 98/13526; Thompson *et al.*, USSN 60/082,404 which was filed on April 20, 1998; Karpeisky *et al.*, 1998, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 39, 1131; Earnshaw and Gait, 1998, *Biopolymers (Nucleic Acid Sciences)*, 48, 39-55; Verma and Eckstein, 1998, *Annu. Rev. Biochem.*, 67, 99-134; and Burlina *et al.*, 1997, *Bioorg. Med. Chem.*, 5, 1999-2010; all of the references are hereby incorporated in their totality by reference herein). Such 10 publications describe general methods and strategies to determine the location of incorporation of sugar, base and/or phosphate modifications and the like into nucleic acid molecules without modulating catalysis, and are incorporated by reference herein. In view of such teachings, similar modifications can be used as described herein to modify the siNA nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention so long as the ability of siNA to 15 promote RNAi in cells is not significantly inhibited.

While chemical modification of oligonucleotide internucleotide linkages with phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate, and/or 5'-methylphosphonate linkages improves stability, excessive modifications can cause some toxicity or decreased activity. Therefore, when designing nucleic acid molecules, the amount of these internucleotide 20 linkages should be minimized. The reduction in the concentration of these linkages should lower toxicity, resulting in increased efficacy and higher specificity of these molecules.

Short interfering nucleic acid (siNA) molecules having chemical modifications that maintain or enhance activity are provided. Such a nucleic acid is also generally more 25 resistant to nucleases than an unmodified nucleic acid. Accordingly, the *in vitro* and/or *in vivo* activity should not be significantly lowered. In cases in which modulation is the goal, therapeutic nucleic acid molecules delivered exogenously should optimally be stable within cells until translation of the target RNA has been modulated long enough to reduce the levels of the undesirable protein. This period of time varies between hours to 30 days depending upon the disease state. Improvements in the chemical synthesis of RNA and DNA (Wincott *et al.*, 1995, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 23, 2677; Caruthers *et al.*, 1992, *Methods in Enzymology* 211,3-19 (incorporated by reference herein)) have expanded the

ability to modify nucleic acid molecules by introducing nucleotide modifications to enhance their nuclease stability, as described above.

In one embodiment, nucleic acid molecules of the invention include one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) G-clamp nucleotides. A G-clamp 5 nucleotide is a modified cytosine analog wherein the modifications confer the ability to hydrogen bond both Watson-Crick and Hoogsteen faces of a complementary guanine within a duplex, see for example Lin and Matteucci, 1998, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 120, 8531-8532. A single G-clamp analog substitution within an oligonucleotide can result in substantially enhanced helical thermal stability and mismatch discrimination when 10 hybridized to complementary oligonucleotides. The inclusion of such nucleotides in nucleic acid molecules of the invention results in both enhanced affinity and specificity to nucleic acid targets, complementary sequences, or template strands. In another embodiment, nucleic acid molecules of the invention include one or more (e.g., about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more) LNA "locked nucleic acid" nucleotides such as a 2', 4'-15 C methylene bicyclo nucleotide (see for example Wengel *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/66604 and WO 99/14226).

In another embodiment, the invention features conjugates and/or complexes of siNA molecules of the invention. Such conjugates and/or complexes can be used to facilitate delivery of siNA molecules into a biological system, such as a cell. The 20 conjugates and complexes provided by the instant invention can impart therapeutic activity by transferring therapeutic compounds across cellular membranes, altering the pharmacokinetics, and/or modulating the localization of nucleic acid molecules of the invention. The present invention encompasses the design and synthesis of novel conjugates and complexes for the delivery of molecules, including, but not limited to, 25 small molecules, lipids, cholesterol, phospholipids, nucleosides, nucleotides, nucleic acids, antibodies, toxins, negatively charged polymers and other polymers, for example proteins, peptides, hormones, carbohydrates, polyethylene glycols, or polyamines, across cellular membranes. In general, the transporters described are designed to be used either individually or as part of a multi-component system, with or without degradable linkers. 30 These compounds are expected to improve delivery and/or localization of nucleic acid molecules of the invention into a number of cell types originating from different tissues, in the presence or absence of serum (see Sullenger and Cech, U.S. Pat. No. 5,854,038).

Conjugates of the molecules described herein can be attached to biologically active molecules via linkers that are biodegradable, such as biodegradable nucleic acid linker molecules.

The term "biodegradable linker" as used herein, refers to a nucleic acid or non-nucleic acid linker molecule that is designed as a biodegradable linker to connect one molecule to another molecule, for example, a biologically active molecule to a siNA molecule of the invention or the sense and antisense strands of a siNA molecule of the invention. The biodegradable linker is designed such that its stability can be modulated for a particular purpose, such as delivery to a particular tissue or cell type. The stability of a nucleic acid-based biodegradable linker molecule can be modulated by using various chemistries, for example combinations of ribonucleotides, deoxyribonucleotides, and chemically-modified nucleotides, such as 2'-O-methyl, 2'-fluoro, 2'-amino, 2'-O-amino, 2'-C-allyl, 2'-O-allyl, and other 2'-modified or base modified nucleotides. The biodegradable nucleic acid linker molecule can be a dimer, trimer, tetramer or longer nucleic acid molecule, for example, an oligonucleotide of about 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, or 20 nucleotides in length, or can comprise a single nucleotide with a phosphorus-based linkage, for example, a phosphoramidate or phosphodiester linkage. The biodegradable nucleic acid linker molecule can also comprise nucleic acid backbone, nucleic acid sugar, or nucleic acid base modifications.

The term "biodegradable" as used herein, refers to degradation in a biological system, for example enzymatic degradation or chemical degradation.

The term "biologically active molecule" as used herein, refers to compounds or molecules that are capable of eliciting or modifying a biological response in a system. Non-limiting examples of biologically active siNA molecules either alone or in combination with other molecules contemplated by the instant invention include therapeutically active molecules such as antibodies, cholesterol, hormones, antivirals, peptides, proteins, chemotherapeutics, small molecules, vitamins, co-factors, nucleosides, nucleotides, oligonucleotides, enzymatic nucleic acids, antisense nucleic acids, triplex forming oligonucleotides, 2,5-A chimeras, siNA, dsRNA, allozymes, aptamers, decoys and analogs thereof. Biologically active molecules of the invention also include molecules capable of modulating the pharmacokinetics and/or

pharmacodynamics of other biologically active molecules, for example, lipids and polymers such as polyamines, polyamides, polyethylene glycol and other polyethers.

The term "phospholipid" as used herein, refers to a hydrophobic molecule comprising at least one phosphorus group. For example, a phospholipid can comprise a 5 phosphorus-containing group and saturated or unsaturated alkyl group, optionally substituted with OH, COOH, oxo, amine, or substituted or unsubstituted aryl groups.

Therapeutic nucleic acid molecules (*e.g.*, siNA molecules) delivered exogenously optimally are stable within cells until reverse transcription of the RNA has been modulated long enough to reduce the levels of the RNA transcript. The nucleic acid 10 molecules are resistant to nucleases in order to function as effective intracellular therapeutic agents. Improvements in the chemical synthesis of nucleic acid molecules described in the instant invention and in the art have expanded the ability to modify nucleic acid molecules by introducing nucleotide modifications to enhance their nuclease stability as described above.

In yet another embodiment, siNA molecules having chemical modifications that maintain or enhance enzymatic activity of proteins involved in RNAi are provided. Such nucleic acids are also generally more resistant to nucleases than unmodified nucleic acids. Thus, *in vitro* and/or *in vivo* the activity should not be significantly lowered.

Use of the nucleic acid-based molecules of the invention will lead to better 20 treatment of the disease progression by affording the possibility of combination therapies (*e.g.*, multiple siNA molecules targeted to different genes; nucleic acid molecules coupled with known small molecule modulators; or intermittent treatment with combinations of molecules, including different motifs and/or other chemical or biological molecules). The treatment of subjects with siNA molecules can also include 25 combinations of different types of nucleic acid molecules, such as enzymatic nucleic acid molecules (ribozymes), allozymes, antisense, 2,5-A oligoadenylate, decoys, and aptamers.

In another aspect a siNA molecule of the invention comprises one or more 5' and/or a 3'- cap structure, for example on only the sense siNA strand, the antisense siNA 30 strand, or both siNA strands.

By "cap structure" is meant chemical modifications, which have been incorporated at either terminus of the oligonucleotide (see, for example, Adamic *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,998,203, incorporated by reference herein). These terminal modifications protect the nucleic acid molecule from exonuclease degradation, and may help in delivery and/or 5 localization within a cell. The cap may be present at the 5'-terminus (5'-cap) or at the 3'-terminal (3'-cap) or may be present on both termini. In non-limiting examples, the 5'-cap includes, but is not limited to, glyceryl, inverted deoxy abasic residue (moiety); 4',5'-methylene nucleotide; 1-(beta-D-erythrofuranosyl) nucleotide, 4'-thio nucleotide; carbocyclic nucleotide; 1,5-anhydrohexitol nucleotide; L-nucleotides; alpha-nucleotides; 10 modified base nucleotide; phosphorodithioate linkage; *threo*-pentofuranosyl nucleotide; acyclic 3',4'-seco nucleotide; acyclic 3,4-dihydroxybutyl nucleotide; acyclic 3,5-dihydroxypentyl nucleotide, 3'-3'-inverted nucleotide moiety; 3'-3'-inverted abasic moiety; 3'-2'-inverted nucleotide moiety; 3'-2'-inverted abasic moiety; 1,4-butanediol phosphate; 3'-phosphoramidate; hexylphosphate; aminohexyl phosphate; 3'-phosphate; 15 3'-phosphorothioate; phosphorodithioate; or bridging or non-bridging methylphosphonate moiety.

Non-limiting examples of the 3'-cap include, but are not limited to, glyceryl, inverted deoxy abasic residue (moiety), 4', 5'-methylene nucleotide; 1-(beta-D-erythrofuranosyl) nucleotide; 4'-thio nucleotide, carbocyclic nucleotide; 5'-amino-alkyl phosphate; 1,3-diamino-2-propyl phosphate; 3-aminopropyl phosphate; 6-aminohexyl phosphate; 1,2-aminododecyl phosphate; hydroxypropyl phosphate; 1,5-anhydrohexitol nucleotide; L-nucleotide; alpha-nucleotide; modified base nucleotide; phosphorodithioate; *threo*-pentofuranosyl nucleotide; acyclic 3',4'-seco nucleotide; 3,4-dihydroxybutyl nucleotide; 3,5-dihydroxypentyl nucleotide, 5'-5'-inverted nucleotide moiety; 5'-5'-inverted abasic moiety; 5'-phosphoramidate; 5'-phosphorothioate; 1,4-butanediol phosphate; 5'-amino; bridging and/or non-bridging 5'-phosphoramidate, phosphorothioate and/or phosphorodithioate, bridging or non bridging methylphosphonate and 5'-mercapto moieties (for more details see Beaucage and Iyer, 25 1993, *Tetrahedron* 49, 1925; incorporated by reference herein).

30 By the term "non-nucleotide" is meant any group or compound which can be incorporated into a nucleic acid chain in the place of one or more nucleotide units, including either sugar and/or phosphate substitutions, and allows the remaining bases to

exhibit their enzymatic activity. The group or compound is abasic in that it does not contain a commonly recognized nucleotide base, such as adenosine, guanine, cytosine, uracil or thymine and therefore lacks a base at the 1'-position.

An "alkyl" group refers to a saturated aliphatic hydrocarbon, including straight-chain, branched-chain, and cyclic alkyl groups. Preferably, the alkyl group has 1 to 12 carbons. More preferably, it is a lower alkyl of from 1 to 7 carbons, more preferably 1 to 4 carbons. The alkyl group can be substituted or unsubstituted. When substituted the substituted group(s) is preferably, hydroxyl, cyano, alkoxy, =O, =S, NO₂ or N(CH₃)₂, amino, or SH. The term also includes alkenyl groups that are unsaturated hydrocarbon groups containing at least one carbon-carbon double bond, including straight-chain, branched-chain, and cyclic groups. Preferably, the alkenyl group has 1 to 12 carbons. More preferably, it is a lower alkenyl of from 1 to 7 carbons, more preferably 1 to 4 carbons. The alkenyl group may be substituted or unsubstituted. When substituted the substituted group(s) is preferably, hydroxyl, cyano, alkoxy, =O, =S, NO₂, halogen, N(CH₃)₂, amino, or SH. The term "alkyl" also includes alkynyl groups that have an unsaturated hydrocarbon group containing at least one carbon-carbon triple bond, including straight-chain, branched-chain, and cyclic groups. Preferably, the alkynyl group has 1 to 12 carbons. More preferably, it is a lower alkynyl of from 1 to 7 carbons, more preferably 1 to 4 carbons. The alkynyl group may be substituted or unsubstituted. When substituted the substituted group(s) is preferably, hydroxyl, cyano, alkoxy, =O, =S, NO₂ or N(CH₃)₂, amino or SH.

Such alkyl groups can also include aryl, alkylaryl, carbocyclic aryl, heterocyclic aryl, amide and ester groups. An "aryl" group refers to an aromatic group that has at least one ring having a conjugated pi electron system and includes carbocyclic aryl, heterocyclic aryl and biaryl groups, all of which may be optionally substituted. The preferred substituent(s) of aryl groups are halogen, trihalomethyl, hydroxyl, SH, OH, cyano, alkoxy, alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, and amino groups. An "alkylaryl" group refers to an alkyl group (as described above) covalently joined to an aryl group (as described above). Carbocyclic aryl groups are groups wherein the ring atoms on the aromatic ring are all carbon atoms. The carbon atoms are optionally substituted. Heterocyclic aryl groups are groups having from 1 to 3 heteroatoms as ring atoms in the aromatic ring and the remainder of the ring atoms are carbon atoms. Suitable heteroatoms include oxygen,

sulfur, and nitrogen, and include furanyl, thienyl, pyridyl, pyrrolyl, N-lower alkyl pyrrolo, pyrimidyl, pyrazinyl, imidazolyl and the like, all optionally substituted. An "amide" refers to an -C(O)-NH-R, where R is either alkyl, aryl, alkylaryl or hydrogen. An "ester" refers to an -C(O)-OR', where R is either alkyl, aryl, alkylaryl or hydrogen.

5 By "nucleotide" as used herein is as recognized in the art to include natural bases (standard), and modified bases well known in the art. Such bases are generally located at the 1' position of a nucleotide sugar moiety. Nucleotides generally comprise a base, sugar and a phosphate group. The nucleotides can be unmodified or modified at the sugar, phosphate and/or base moiety, (also referred to interchangeably as nucleotide
10 analogs, modified nucleotides, non-natural nucleotides, non-standard nucleotides and other; see, for example, Usman and McSwiggen, *supra*; Eckstein *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 92/07065; Usman *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 93/15187; Uhlman & Peyman, *supra*, all are hereby incorporated by reference herein). There are several examples of modified nucleic acid bases known in the art as
15 summarized by Limbach *et al.*, 1994, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 22, 2183. Some of the non-limiting examples of base modifications that can be introduced into nucleic acid molecules include, inosine, purine, pyridin-4-one, pyridin-2-one, phenyl, pseudouracil, 2, 4, 6-trimethoxy benzene, 3-methyl uracil, dihydrouridine, naphthyl, aminophenyl,
20 5-alkylcytidines (e.g., 5-methylcytidine), 5-alkyluridines (e.g., ribothymidine), 5-halouridine (e.g., 5-bromouridine) or 6-azapyrimidines or 6-alkylpyrimidines (e.g. 6-methyluridine), propyne, and others (Burgin *et al.*, 1996, *Biochemistry*, 35, 14090; Uhlman & Peyman, *supra*). By "modified bases" in this aspect is meant nucleotide bases other than adenine, guanine, cytosine and uracil at 1' position or their equivalents.

In one embodiment, the invention features modified siNA molecules, with
25 phosphate backbone modifications comprising one or more phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate, methylphosphonate, phosphotriester, morpholino, amide carbamate, carboxymethyl, acetamide, polyamide, sulfonate, sulfonamide, sulfamate, formacetal, thioformacetal, and/or alkylsilyl, substitutions. For a review of oligonucleotide backbone modifications, see Hunziker and Leumann, 1995, *Nucleic Acid
30 Analogues: Synthesis and Properties*, in *Modern Synthetic Methods*, VCH, 331-417, and Mesmaeker *et al.*, 1994, *Novel Backbone Replacements for Oligonucleotides*, in *Carbohydrate Modifications in Antisense Research*, ACS, 24-39.

By "abasic" is meant sugar moieties lacking a base or having other chemical groups in place of a base at the 1' position, see for example Adamic *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,998,203.

5 By "unmodified nucleoside" is meant one of the bases adenine, cytosine, guanine, thymine, or uracil joined to the 1' carbon of β-D-ribo-furanose.

By "modified nucleoside" is meant any nucleotide base which contains a modification in the chemical structure of an unmodified nucleotide base, sugar and/or phosphate. Non-limiting examples of modified nucleotides are shown by Formulae I-VII and/or other modifications described herein.

10 In connection with 2'-modified nucleotides as described for the present invention, by "amino" is meant 2'-NH₂ or 2'-O- NH₂, which can be modified or unmodified. Such modified groups are described, for example, in Eckstein *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,672,695 and Matulic-Adamic *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 6,248,878, which are both incorporated by reference in their entireties.

15 Various modifications to nucleic acid siNA structure can be made to enhance the utility of these molecules. Such modifications will enhance shelf-life, half-life *in vitro*, stability, and ease of introduction of such oligonucleotides to the target site, e.g., to enhance penetration of cellular membranes, and confer the ability to recognize and bind to targeted cells.

20 Administration of Nucleic Acid Molecules

A siNA molecule of the invention can be adapted for use to treat, for example, tumor angiogenesis and cancer, including but not limited to breast cancer, lung cancer (including non-small cell lung carcinoma), prostate cancer, colorectal cancer, brain cancer, esophageal cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, cervical cancer, head and neck cancer, skin cancers, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, liposarcoma, epithelial carcinoma, renal cell carcinoma, gallbladder adeno carcinoma, parotid adenocarcinoma, ovarian cancer, melanoma, lymphoma, glioma, endometrial sarcoma, multidrug resistant cancers, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, neovascular glaucoma, myopic degeneration, arthritis, psoriasis, endometriosis, female reproduction, verruca vulgaris, angiofibroma of tuberous sclerosis, pot-wine stains, Sturge Weber syndrome, Kippel-Trenaunay-Weber

syndrome, Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome, renal disease such as Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD), and any other diseases or conditions that are related to or will respond to the levels of VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 in a cell or tissue, alone or in combination with other therapies. For example, a siNA molecule can

5 comprise a delivery vehicle, including liposomes, for administration to a subject, carriers and diluents and their salts, and/or can be present in pharmaceutically acceptable formulations. Methods for the delivery of nucleic acid molecules are described in Akhtar *et al.*, 1992, *Trends Cell Bio.*, 2, 139; *Delivery Strategies for Antisense Oligonucleotide Therapeutics*, ed. Akhtar, 1995, Maurer *et al.*, 1999, *Mol. Membr. Biol.*,

10 16, 129-140; Hofland and Huang, 1999, *Handb. Exp. Pharmacol.*, 137, 165-192; and Lee *et al.*, 2000, *ACS Symp. Ser.*, 752, 184-192, all of which are incorporated herein by reference. Beigelman *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 6,395,713 and Sullivan *et al.*, PCT WO 94/02595 further describe the general methods for delivery of nucleic acid molecules. These protocols can be utilized for the delivery of virtually any nucleic acid molecule.

15 Nucleic acid molecules can be administered to cells by a variety of methods known to those of skill in the art, including, but not restricted to, encapsulation in liposomes, by iontophoresis, or by incorporation into other vehicles, such as biodegradable polymers, hydrogels, cyclodextrins (see for example Gonzalez *et al.*, 1999, *Bioconjugate Chem.*, 10, 1068-1074; Wang *et al.*, International PCT publication Nos. WO 03/47518 and WO

20 03/46185), poly(lactic-co-glycolic)acid (PLGA) and PLCA microspheres (see for example US Patent 6,447,796 and US Patent Application Publication No. US 2002130430), biodegradable nanocapsules, and bioadhesive microspheres, or by proteinaceous vectors (O'Hare and Normand, International PCT Publication No. WO 00/53722). In another embodiment, the nucleic acid molecules of the invention can also

25 be formulated or complexed with polyethyleneimine and derivatives thereof, such as polyethyleneimine-polyethyleneglycol-N-acetylgalactosamine (PEI-PEG-GAL) or polyethyleneimine-polyethyleneglycol-tri-N-acetylgalactosamine (PEI-PEG-triGAL) derivatives. Alternatively, the nucleic acid/vehicle combination is locally delivered by direct injection or by use of an infusion pump. Direct injection of the nucleic acid

30 molecules of the invention, whether subcutaneous, intramuscular, or intradermal, can take place using standard needle and syringe methodologies, or by needle-free technologies such as those described in Conry *et al.*, 1999, *Clin. Cancer Res.*, 5, 2330-2337 and Barry *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 99/31262. The molecules

of the instant invention can be used as pharmaceutical agents. Pharmaceutical agents prevent, modulate the occurrence, or treat (alleviate a symptom to some extent, preferably all of the symptoms) of a disease state in a subject.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is designed or formulated to
5 specifically target endothelial cells or tumor cells. For example, various formulations and conjugates can be utilized to specifically target endothelial cells or tumor cells, including PEI-PEG-folate, PEI-PEG-RGD, PEI-PEG-biotin, PEI-PEG-cholesterol, and other conjugates known in the art that enable specific targeting to endothelial cells and/or tumor cells.

10 In one embodiment, a compound, molecule, or composition for the treatment of ocular conditions (e.g., macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy etc.) is administered to a subject intraocularly or by intraocular means. In another embodiment, a compound, molecule, or composition for the treatment of ocular conditions (e.g., macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy etc.) is administered to a subject periocularly or by
15 periocular means (see for example Ahlheim et al., International PCT publication No. WO 03/24420). In one embodiment, a siNA molecule and/or formulation or composition thereof is administered to a subject intraocularly or by intraocular means. In another embodiment, a siNA molecule and/or formualtion or composition thereof is administered to a subject periocularly or by periocular means. Periocular administration generally provides a less invasive approach to administering siNA molecules and formualtion or composition thereof to a subject (see for example Ahlheim et al., International PCT publication No. WO 03/24420). The use of periocular administration also minimizes the risk of retinal detachment, allows for more frequent dosing or administration, provides a clinically relevant route of administration for macular degeneration and other
20 optic conditions, and also provides the possiblity of using resevoirs (e.g., implants, pumps or other devices) for drug delivery.

In one embodiment, a siNA molecule of the invention is complexed with membrane disruptive agents such as those described in U.S. Patent Appliaction Publication No. 20010007666, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety including
30 the drawings. In another embodiment, the membrane disruptive agent or agents and the siNA molecule are also complexed with a cationic lipid or helper lipid molecule, such as

those lipids described in U.S. Patent No. 6,235,310, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety including the drawings.

Thus, the invention features a pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more nucleic acid(s) of the invention in an acceptable carrier, such as a stabilizer, buffer, and the like. The polynucleotides of the invention can be administered (*e.g.*, RNA, DNA or protein) and introduced into a subject by any standard means, with or without stabilizers, buffers, and the like, to form a pharmaceutical composition. When it is desired to use a liposome delivery mechanism, standard protocols for formation of liposomes can be followed. The compositions of the present invention can also be formulated and used as tablets, capsules or elixirs for oral administration, suppositories for rectal administration, sterile solutions, suspensions for injectable administration, and the other compositions known in the art.

The present invention also includes pharmaceutically acceptable formulations of the compounds described. These formulations include salts of the above compounds, *e.g.*, acid addition salts, for example, salts of hydrochloric, hydrobromic, acetic acid, and benzene sulfonic acid.

A pharmacological composition or formulation refers to a composition or formulation in a form suitable for administration, *e.g.*, systemic administration, into a cell or subject, including for example a human. Suitable forms, in part, depend upon the use or the route of entry, for example oral, transdermal, or by injection. Such forms should not prevent the composition or formulation from reaching a target cell (*i.e.*, a cell to which the negatively charged nucleic acid is desirable for delivery). For example, pharmacological compositions injected into the blood stream should be soluble. Other factors are known in the art, and include considerations such as toxicity and forms that prevent the composition or formulation from exerting its effect.

By "systemic administration" is meant *in vivo* systemic absorption or accumulation of drugs in the blood stream followed by distribution throughout the entire body. Administration routes that lead to systemic absorption include, without limitation: intravenous, subcutaneous, intraperitoneal, inhalation, oral, intrapulmonary and intramuscular. Each of these administration routes exposes the siNA molecules of the invention to an accessible diseased tissue. The rate of entry of a drug into the

circulation has been shown to be a function of molecular weight or size. The use of a liposome or other drug carrier comprising the compounds of the instant invention can potentially localize the drug, for example, in certain tissue types, such as the tissues of the reticular endothelial system (RES). A liposome formulation that can facilitate the 5 association of drug with the surface of cells, such as, lymphocytes and macrophages is also useful. This approach can provide enhanced delivery of the drug to target cells by taking advantage of the specificity of macrophage and lymphocyte immune recognition of abnormal cells, such as cells producing excess VEGF and/or VEGFr.

By "pharmaceutically acceptable formulation" is meant, a composition or 10 formulation that allows for the effective distribution of the nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention in the physical location most suitable for their desired activity. Non-limiting examples of agents suitable for formulation with the nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention include: P-glycoprotein inhibitors (such as Pluronic P85), which can enhance entry of drugs into the CNS (Jolliet-Riant and Tillement, 1999, *Fundam. Clin. Pharmacol.*, 13, 16-26); biodegradable polymers, such as poly (DL-lactide-coglycolide) 15 microspheres for sustained release delivery after intracerebral implantation (Emerich, DF *et al*, 1999, *Cell Transplant*, 8, 47-58) (Alkermes, Inc. Cambridge, MA); and loaded nanoparticles, such as those made of polybutylcyanoacrylate, which can deliver drugs across the blood brain barrier and can alter neuronal uptake mechanisms (*Prog Neuropsychopharmacol Biol Psychiatry*, 23, 941-949, 1999). Other non-limiting 20 examples of delivery strategies for the nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention include material described in Boado *et al.*, 1998, *J. Pharm. Sci.*, 87, 1308-1315; Tyler *et al.*, 1999, *FEBS Lett.*, 421, 280-284; Pardridge *et al.*, 1995, *PNAS USA.*, 92, 5592-5596; Boado, 1995, *Adv. Drug Delivery Rev.*, 15, 73-107; Aldrian-Herrada *et al.*, 1998, *Nucleic 25 Acids Res.*, 26, 4910-4916; and Tyler *et al.*, 1999, *PNAS USA.*, 96, 7053-7058.

The invention also features the use of the composition comprising surface-modified liposomes containing poly (ethylene glycol) lipids (PEG-modified, or long-circulating liposomes or stealth liposomes). These formulations offer a method for increasing the accumulation of drugs in target tissues. This class of drug carriers resists 30 opsonization and elimination by the mononuclear phagocytic system (MPS or RES), thereby enabling longer blood circulation times and enhanced tissue exposure for the encapsulated drug (Lasic *et al. Chem. Rev.* 1995, 95, 2601-2627; Ishiwata *et al., Chem.*

Pharm. Bull. 1995, 43, 1005-1011). Such liposomes have been shown to accumulate selectively in tumors, presumably by extravasation and capture in the neovascularized target tissues (Lasic *et al.*, *Science* 1995, 267, 1275-1276; Oku *et al.*, 1995, *Biochim. Biophys. Acta*, 1238, 86-90). The long-circulating liposomes enhance the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of DNA and RNA, particularly compared to conventional cationic liposomes which are known to accumulate in tissues of the MPS (Liu *et al.*, *J. Biol. Chem.* 1995, 42, 24864-24870; Choi *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 96/10391; Ansell *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 96/10390; Holland *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 96/10392). Long-circulating liposomes are also likely to protect drugs from nuclease degradation to a greater extent compared to cationic liposomes, based on their ability to avoid accumulation in metabolically aggressive MPS tissues such as the liver and spleen.

The present invention also includes compositions prepared for storage or administration that include a pharmaceutically effective amount of the desired compounds in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent. Acceptable carriers or diluents for therapeutic use are well known in the pharmaceutical art, and are described, for example, in *Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences*, Mack Publishing Co. (A.R. Gennaro edit. 1985), hereby incorporated by reference herein. For example, preservatives, stabilizers, dyes and flavoring agents can be provided. These include sodium benzoate, sorbic acid and esters of *p*-hydroxybenzoic acid. In addition, antioxidants and suspending agents can be used.

A pharmaceutically effective dose is that dose required to prevent, inhibit the occurrence, or treat (alleviate a symptom to some extent, preferably all of the symptoms) of a disease state. The pharmaceutically effective dose depends on the type of disease, the composition used, the route of administration, the type of mammal being treated, the physical characteristics of the specific mammal under consideration, concurrent medication, and other factors that those skilled in the medical arts will recognize. Generally, an amount between 0.1 mg/kg and 100 mg/kg body weight/day of active ingredients is administered dependent upon potency of the negatively charged polymer.

The nucleic acid molecules of the invention and formulations thereof can be administered orally, topically, parenterally, by inhalation or spray, or rectally in dosage

unit formulations containing conventional non-toxic pharmaceutically acceptable carriers, adjuvants and/or vehicles. The term parenteral as used herein includes percutaneous, subcutaneous, intravascular (e.g., intravenous), intramuscular, or intrathecal injection or infusion techniques and the like. In addition, there is provided a 5 pharmaceutical formulation comprising a nucleic acid molecule of the invention and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier. One or more nucleic acid molecules of the invention can be present in association with one or more non-toxic pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and/or diluents and/or adjuvants, and if desired other active ingredients. The pharmaceutical compositions containing nucleic acid molecules of the 10 invention can be in a form suitable for oral use, for example, as tablets, troches, lozenges, aqueous or oily suspensions, dispersible powders or granules, emulsion, hard or soft capsules, or syrups or elixirs.

Compositions intended for oral use can be prepared according to any method known to the art for the manufacture of pharmaceutical compositions and such 15 compositions can contain one or more such sweetening agents, flavoring agents, coloring agents or preservative agents in order to provide pharmaceutically elegant and palatable preparations. Tablets contain the active ingredient in admixture with non-toxic pharmaceutically acceptable excipients that are suitable for the manufacture of tablets. These excipients can be, for example, inert diluents; such as calcium carbonate, sodium 20 carbonate, lactose, calcium phosphate or sodium phosphate; granulating and disintegrating agents, for example, corn starch, or alginic acid; binding agents, for example starch, gelatin or acacia; and lubricating agents, for example magnesium stearate, stearic acid or talc. The tablets can be uncoated or they can be coated by known 25 techniques. In some cases such coatings can be prepared by known techniques to delay disintegration and absorption in the gastrointestinal tract and thereby provide a sustained action over a longer period. For example, a time delay material such as glyceryl monostearate or glyceryl distearate can be employed.

Formulations for oral use can also be presented as hard gelatin capsules wherein the active ingredient is mixed with an inert solid diluent, for example, calcium carbonate, 30 calcium phosphate or kaolin, or as soft gelatin capsules wherein the active ingredient is mixed with water or an oil medium, for example peanut oil, liquid paraffin or olive oil.

Aqueous suspensions contain the active materials in a mixture with excipients suitable for the manufacture of aqueous suspensions. Such excipients are suspending agents, for example sodium carboxymethylcellulose, methylcellulose, hydropropylmethylcellulose, sodium alginate, polyvinylpyrrolidone, gum tragacanth and gum acacia; 5 dispersing or wetting agents can be a naturally-occurring phosphatide, for example, lecithin, or condensation products of an alkylene oxide with fatty acids, for example polyoxyethylene stearate, or condensation products of ethylene oxide with long chain aliphatic alcohols, for example heptadecaethyleneoxycetanol, or condensation products of ethylene oxide with partial esters derived from fatty acids and a hexitol such as 10 polyoxyethylene sorbitol monooleate, or condensation products of ethylene oxide with partial esters derived from fatty acids and hexitol anhydrides, for example polyethylene sorbitan monooleate. The aqueous suspensions can also contain one or more preservatives, for example ethyl, or n-propyl p-hydroxybenzoate, one or more coloring agents, one or more flavoring agents, and one or more sweetening agents, such as 15 sucrose or saccharin.

Oily suspensions can be formulated by suspending the active ingredients in a vegetable oil, for example arachis oil, olive oil, sesame oil or coconut oil, or in a mineral oil such as liquid paraffin. The oily suspensions can contain a thickening agent, for example beeswax, hard paraffin or cetyl alcohol. Sweetening agents and flavoring 20 agents can be added to provide palatable oral preparations. These compositions can be preserved by the addition of an anti-oxidant such as ascorbic acid

Dispersible powders and granules suitable for preparation of an aqueous suspension by the addition of water provide the active ingredient in admixture with a dispersing or wetting agent, suspending agent and one or more preservatives. Suitable 25 dispersing or wetting agents or suspending agents are exemplified by those already mentioned above. Additional excipients, for example sweetening, flavoring and coloring agents, can also be present.

Pharmaceutical compositions of the invention can also be in the form of oil-in-water emulsions. The oily phase can be a vegetable oil or a mineral oil or mixtures of 30 these. Suitable emulsifying agents can be naturally-occurring gums, for example gum acacia or gum tragacanth, naturally-occurring phosphatides, for example soy bean,

lecithin, and esters or partial esters derived from fatty acids and hexitol, anhydrides, for example sorbitan monooleate, and condensation products of the said partial esters with ethylene oxide, for example polyoxyethylene sorbitan monooleate. The emulsions can also contain sweetening and flavoring agents.

5 Syrups and elixirs can be formulated with sweetening agents, for example glycerol, propylene glycol, sorbitol, glucose or sucrose. Such formulations can also contain a demulcent, a preservative and flavoring and coloring agents. The pharmaceutical compositions can be in the form of a sterile injectable aqueous or oleaginous suspension. This suspension can be formulated according to the known art using those suitable
10 dispersing or wetting agents and suspending agents that have been mentioned above. The sterile injectable preparation can also be a sterile injectable solution or suspension in a non-toxic parentally acceptable diluent or solvent, for example as a solution in 1,3-butanediol. Among the acceptable vehicles and solvents that can be employed are water, Ringer's solution and isotonic sodium chloride solution. In addition, sterile, fixed oils
15 are conventionally employed as a solvent or suspending medium. For this purpose, any bland fixed oil can be employed including synthetic mono-or diglycerides. In addition, fatty acids such as oleic acid find use in the preparation of injectables.

The nucleic acid molecules of the invention can also be administered in the form of suppositories, *e.g.*, for rectal administration of the drug. These compositions can be prepared by mixing the drug with a suitable non-irritating excipient that is solid at ordinary temperatures but liquid at the rectal temperature and will therefore melt in the rectum to release the drug. Such materials include cocoa butter and polyethylene
20 glycols.

Nucleic acid molecules of the invention can be administered parenterally in a
25 sterile medium. The drug, depending on the vehicle and concentration used, can either be suspended or dissolved in the vehicle. Advantageously, adjuvants such as local anesthetics, preservatives and buffering agents can be dissolved in the vehicle.

Dosage levels of the order of from about 0.1 mg to about 140 mg per kilogram of body weight per day are useful in the treatment of the above-indicated conditions (about
30 0.5 mg to about 7 g per subject per day). The amount of active ingredient that can be combined with the carrier materials to produce a single dosage form varies depending

upon the host treated and the particular mode of administration. Dosage unit forms generally contain between from about 1 mg to about 500 mg of an active ingredient.

It is understood that the specific dose level for any particular subject depends upon a variety of factors including the activity of the specific compound employed, the age, 5 body weight, general health, sex, diet, time of administration, route of administration, and rate of excretion, drug combination and the severity of the particular disease undergoing therapy.

For administration to non-human animals, the composition can also be added to the animal feed or drinking water. It can be convenient to formulate the animal feed and 10 drinking water compositions so that the animal takes in a therapeutically appropriate quantity of the composition along with its diet. It can also be convenient to present the composition as a premix for addition to the feed or drinking water.

The nucleic acid molecules of the present invention can also be administered to a subject in combination with other therapeutic compounds to increase the overall 15 therapeutic effect. The use of multiple compounds to treat an indication can increase the beneficial effects while reducing the presence of side effects.

In one embodiment, the invention comprises compositions suitable for administering nucleic acid molecules of the invention to specific cell types. For example, the asialoglycoprotein receptor (ASGPr) (Wu and Wu, 1987, *J. Biol. Chem.* 20 262, 4429-4432) is unique to hepatocytes and binds branched galactose-terminal glycoproteins, such as asialoorosomucoid (ASOR). In another example, the folate receptor is overexpressed in many cancer cells. Binding of such glycoproteins, synthetic glycoconjugates, or folates to the receptor takes place with an affinity that strongly depends on the degree of branching of the oligosaccharide chain, for example, 25 triantennary structures are bound with greater affinity than biantennary or monoantennary chains (Baenziger and Fiete, 1980, *Cell*, 22, 611-620; Connolly *et al.*, 1982, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 257, 939-945). Lee and Lee, 1987, *Glycoconjugate J.*, 4, 317-328, obtained this high specificity through the use of N-acetyl-D-galactosamine as the carbohydrate moiety, which has higher affinity for the receptor, compared to galactose. This "clustering effect" 30 has also been described for the binding and uptake of mannose-terminating glycoproteins or glycoconjugates (Ponpipom *et al.*, 1981, *J. Med. Chem.*, 24, 1388-

1395). The use of galactose, galactosamine, or folate based conjugates to transport exogenous compounds across cell membranes can provide a targeted delivery approach to, for example, the treatment of liver disease, cancers of the liver, or other cancers. The use of bioconjugates can also provide a reduction in the required dose of therapeutic 5 compounds required for treatment. Furthermore, therapeutic bioavailability, pharmacodynamics, and pharmacokinetic parameters can be modulated through the use of nucleic acid bioconjugates of the invention. Non-limiting examples of such bioconjugates are described in Vargeese *et al.*, USSN 10/201,394, filed August 13, 2001; and Matulic-Adamic *et al.*, USSN 10/151,116, filed May 17, 2002. In one embodiment, 10 nucleic acid molecules of the invention are complexed with or covalently attached to nanoparticles, such as Hepatitis B virus S, M, or L envelope proteins (see for example Yamado *et al.*, 2003, *Nature Biotechnology*, 21, 885). In one embodiment, nucleic acid molecules of the invention are delivered with specificity for human tumor cells, specifically non-apoptotic human tumor cells including for example T-cells, hepatocytes, 15 breast carcinoma cells, ovarian carcinoma cells, melanoma cells, intestinal epithelial cells, prostate cells, testicular cells, non-small cell lung cancers, small cell lung cancers, etc.

Alternatively, certain siNA molecules of the instant invention can be expressed 20 within cells from eukaryotic promoters (*e.g.*, Izant and Weintraub, 1985, *Science*, 229, 345; McGarry and Lindquist, 1986, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci., USA* 83, 399; Scanlon *et al.*, 1991, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, 88, 10591-5; Kashani-Sabet *et al.*, 1992, *Antisense Res. Dev.*, 2, 3-15; Dropulic *et al.*, 1992, *J. Virol.*, 66, 1432-41; Weerasinghe *et al.*, 1991, *J. Virol.*, 65, 5531-4; Ojwang *et al.*, 1992, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, 89, 10802-6; Chen *et al.*, 1992, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 20, 4581-9; Sarver *et al.*, 1990 *Science*, 247, 25 1222-1225; Thompson *et al.*, 1995, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 23, 2259; Good *et al.*, 1997, *Gene Therapy*, 4, 45. Those skilled in the art realize that any nucleic acid can be expressed in eukaryotic cells from the appropriate DNA/RNA vector. The activity of such nucleic acids can be augmented by their release from the primary transcript by a enzymatic nucleic acid (Draper *et al.*, PCT WO 93/23569, and Sullivan *et al.*, PCT WO 30 94/02595; Ohkawa *et al.*, 1992, *Nucleic Acids Symp. Ser.*, 27, 15-6; Taira *et al.*, 1991, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 19, 5125-30; Ventura *et al.*, 1993, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 21, 3249-55; Chowrira *et al.*, 1994, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 269, 25856.

In another aspect of the invention, RNA molecules of the present invention can be expressed from transcription units (see for example Couture *et al.*, 1996, *TIG.*, 12, 510) inserted into DNA or RNA vectors. The recombinant vectors can be DNA plasmids or viral vectors. siNA expressing viral vectors can be constructed based on, but not limited
5 to, adeno-associated virus, retrovirus, adenovirus, or alphavirus. In another embodiment, pol III based constructs are used to express nucleic acid molecules of the invention (see for example Thompson, U.S. Pats. Nos. 5,902,880 and 6,146,886). The recombinant vectors capable of expressing the siNA molecules can be delivered as described above,
10 and persist in target cells. Alternatively, viral vectors can be used that provide for transient expression of nucleic acid molecules. Such vectors can be repeatedly administered as necessary. Once expressed, the siNA molecule interacts with the target mRNA and generates an RNAi response. Delivery of siNA molecule expressing vectors can be systemic, such as by intravenous or intra-muscular administration, by administration to target cells ex-planted from a subject followed by reintroduction into
15 the subject, or by any other means that would allow for introduction into the desired target cell (for a review see Couture *et al.*, 1996, *TIG.*, 12, 510).

In one aspect the invention features an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one siNA molecule of the instant invention. The expression vector can encode one or both strands of a siNA duplex, or a single self-complementary
20 strand that self hybridizes into a siNA duplex. The nucleic acid sequences encoding the siNA molecules of the instant invention can be operably linked in a manner that allows expression of the siNA molecule (see for example Paul *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 505; Miyagishi and Taira, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 497; Lee *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Biotechnology*, 19, 500; and Novina *et al.*, 2002, *Nature Medicine*,
25 advance online publication doi:10.1038/nm725).

In another aspect, the invention features an expression vector comprising: a) a transcription initiation region (*e.g.*, eukaryotic pol I, II or III initiation region); b) a transcription termination region (*e.g.*, eukaryotic pol I, II or III termination region); and
30 c) a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one of the siNA molecules of the instant invention, wherein said sequence is operably linked to said initiation region and said termination region in a manner that allows expression and/or delivery of the siNA molecule. The vector can optionally include an open reading frame (ORF) for a protein

operably linked on the 5' side or the 3'-side of the sequence encoding the siNA of the invention; and/or an intron (intervening sequences).

Transcription of the siNA molecule sequences can be driven from a promoter for eukaryotic RNA polymerase I (pol I), RNA polymerase II (pol II), or RNA polymerase III (pol III). Transcripts from pol II or pol III promoters are expressed at high levels in all cells; the levels of a given pol II promoter in a given cell type depends on the nature of the gene regulatory sequences (enhancers, silencers, etc.) present nearby. Prokaryotic RNA polymerase promoters are also used, providing that the prokaryotic RNA polymerase enzyme is expressed in the appropriate cells (Elroy-Stein and Moss, 1990, 5 *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A*, 87, 6743-7; Gao and Huang 1993, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 21, 2867-72; Lieber *et al.*, 1993, *Methods Enzymol.*, 217, 47-66; Zhou *et al.*, 1990, *Mol. Cell. Biol.*, 10, 4529-37). Several investigators have demonstrated that nucleic acid molecules expressed from such promoters can function in mammalian cells (e.g. Kashani-Sabet *et al.*, 1992, *Antisense Res. Dev.*, 2, 3-15; Ojwang *et al.*, 1992, *Proc. 10 Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A*, 89, 10802-6; Chen *et al.*, 1992, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 20, 4581-9; Yu *et al.*, 1993, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A*, 90, 6340-4; L'Huillier *et al.*, 1992, *EMBO J.*, 11, 4411-8; Lisziewicz *et al.*, 1993, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.*, 90, 8000-4; Thompson *et al.*, 1995, *Nucleic Acids Res.*, 23, 2259; Sullenger & Cech, 1993, *Science*, 262, 1566). More specifically, transcription units such as the ones derived from genes 15 encoding U6 small nuclear (snRNA), transfer RNA (tRNA) and adenovirus VA RNA are useful in generating high concentrations of desired RNA molecules such as siNA in cells (Thompson *et al.*, *supra*; Couture and Stinchcomb, 1996, *supra*; Noonberg *et al.*, 1994, *Nucleic Acid Res.*, 22, 2830; Noonberg *et al.*, U.S. Pat. No. 5,624,803; Good *et al.*, 1997, *Gene Ther.*, 4, 45; Beigelman *et al.*, International PCT Publication No. WO 96/18736. 20 The above siNA transcription units can be incorporated into a variety of vectors for introduction into mammalian cells, including but not restricted to, plasmid DNA vectors, viral DNA vectors (such as adenovirus or adeno-associated virus vectors), or viral RNA vectors (such as retroviral or alphavirus vectors) (for a review see Couture and Stinchcomb, 1996, *supra*). 25

In another aspect the invention features an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one of the siNA molecules of the invention in a manner that allows expression of that siNA molecule. The expression vector comprises in one 30

embodiment; a) a transcription initiation region; b) a transcription termination region; and c) a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one strand of the siNA molecule, wherein the sequence is operably linked to the initiation region and the termination region in a manner that allows expression and/or delivery of the siNA molecule.

5 In another embodiment the expression vector comprises: a) a transcription initiation region; b) a transcription termination region; c) an open reading frame; and d) a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one strand of a siNA molecule, wherein the sequence is operably linked to the 3'-end of the open reading frame and wherein the sequence is operably linked to the initiation region, the open reading frame and the
10 termination region in a manner that allows expression and/or delivery of the siNA molecule. In yet another embodiment, the expression vector comprises: a) a transcription initiation region; b) a transcription termination region; c) an intron; and d) a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one siNA molecule, wherein the sequence is operably linked to the initiation region, the intron and the termination region in a manner
15 which allows expression and/or delivery of the nucleic acid molecule.

In another embodiment, the expression vector comprises: a) a transcription initiation region; b) a transcription termination region; c) an intron; d) an open reading frame; and e) a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one strand of a siNA molecule, wherein the sequence is operably linked to the 3'-end of the open reading frame and wherein the sequence is operably linked to the initiation region, the intron, the open
20 reading frame and the termination region in a manner which allows expression and/or delivery of the siNA molecule.

VEGF/VEGFr biology and biochemistry

The following discussion is adapted from R&D Systems, Cytokine Mini Reviews,
25 Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF), Copyright ©2002 R&D Systems. Angiogenesis is a process of new blood vessel development from pre-existing vasculature. It plays an essential role in embryonic development, normal growth of tissues, wound healing, the female reproductive cycle (i.e., ovulation, menstruation and placental development), as well as a major role in many diseases. Particular interest has
30 focused on cancer, since tumors cannot grow beyond a few millimeters in size without

developing a new blood supply. Angiogenesis is also necessary for the spread and growth of tumor cell metastases.

One of the most important growth and survival factors for endothelium is vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). VEGF induces angiogenesis and endothelial cell proliferation and plays an important role in regulating vasculogenesis. VEGF is a heparin-binding glycoprotein that is secreted as a homodimer of 45 kDa. Most types of cells, but usually not endothelial cells themselves, secrete VEGF. Since the initially discovered VEGF, VEGF-A, increases vascular permeability, it was known as vascular permeability factor. In addition, VEGF causes vasodilatation, partly through stimulation of nitric oxide synthase in endothelial cells. VEGF can also stimulate cell migration and inhibit apoptosis.

There are several splice variants of VEGF-A. The major ones include: 121, 165, 189 and 206 amino acids (aa), each one comprising a specific exon addition. VEGF165 is the most predominant protein, but transcripts of VEGF 121 may be more abundant. VEGF206 is rarely expressed and has been detected only in fetal liver. Recently, other splice variants of 145 and 183 aa have also been described. The 165, 189 and 206 aa splice variants have heparin-binding domains, which help anchor them in extracellular matrix and are involved in binding to heparin sulfate and presentation to VEGF receptors. Such presentation is a key factor for VEGF potency (i.e., the heparin-binding forms are more active). Several other members of the VEGF family have been cloned including VEGF-B, -C, and -D. Placenta growth factor (PlGF) is also closely related to VEGF-A. VEGF-A, -B, -C, -D, and PlGF are all distantly related to platelet-derived growth factors-A and -B. Less is known about the function and regulation of VEGF-B, -C, and -D, but they do not seem to be regulated by the major pathways that regulate VEGF-A.

VEGF-A transcription is potentiated in response to hypoxia and by activated oncogenes. The transcription factors, hypoxia inducible factor-1a (hif-1a) and -2a, are degraded by proteasomes in normoxia and stabilized in hypoxia. This pathway is dependent on the Von Hippel-Lindau gene product. Hif-1a and hif-2 a heterodimerize with the aryl hydrocarbon nuclear translocator in the nucleus and bind the VEGF promoter/enhancer. This is a key pathway expressed in most types of cells. Hypoxia

inducibility, in particular, characterizes VEGF-A versus other members of the VEGF family and other angiogenic factors. VEGF transcription in normoxia is activated by many oncogenes, including H-ras and several transmembrane tyrosine kinases, such as the epidermal growth factor receptor and erbB2. These pathways together account for a
5 marked upregulation of VEGF-A in tumors compared to normal tissues and are often of prognostic importance.

There are three receptors in the VEGF receptor family. They have the common properties of multiple IgG-like extracellular domains and tyrosine kinase activity. The enzyme domains of VEGF receptor 1 (VEGFr1, also known as Flt-1), VEGFr2 (also
10 known as KDR or Flk-1), and VEGFr3 (also known as Flt-4) are divided by an inserted sequence. Endothelial cells also express additional VEGF receptors, Neuropilin-1 and Neuropilin-2. VEGF-A binds to VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 and to Neuropilin-1 and Neuropilin-2. PIGF and VEGF-B bind VEGFr1 and Neuropilin-1. VEGF-C and -D bind VEGFr3 and VEGFr2.

15 The VEGF-C/VEGFr3 pathway is important for lymphatic proliferation. VEGFr3 is specifically expressed on lymphatic endothelium. A soluble form of Flt-1 can be detected in peripheral blood and is a high affinity ligand for VEGF. Soluble Flt-1 can be used to antagonize VEGF function. VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 are upregulated in tumor and proliferating endothelium, partly by hypoxia and also in response to VEGF-A itself.
20 VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 can interact with multiple downstream signaling pathways via proteins such as PLC-g, Ras, Shc, Nck, PKC and PI3-kinase. VEGFr1 is of higher affinity than VEGFr2 and mediates motility and vascular permeability. VEGFr2 is necessary for proliferation.

25 VEGF can be detected in both plasma and serum samples of patients, with much higher levels in serum. Platelets release VEGF upon aggregation and may be a major source of VEGF delivery to tumors. Several studies have shown that association of high serum levels of VEGF with poor prognosis in cancer patients may be correlated with an elevated platelet count. Many tumors release cytokines that can stimulate the production of megakaryocytes in the marrow and elevate the platelet count. This can result in an
30 indirect increase of VEGF delivery to tumors.

VEGF is implicated in several other pathological conditions associated with enhanced angiogenesis. For example, VEGF plays a role in both psoriasis and rheumatoid arthritis. Diabetic retinopathy is associated with high intraocular levels of VEGF. Inhibition of VEGF function may result in infertility by blockade of corpus luteum function. Direct demonstration of the importance of VEGF in tumor growth has been achieved using dominant negative VEGF receptors to block in vivo proliferation, as well as blocking antibodies to VEGFr1 or to VEGFr2.

The use of small interfering nucleic acid molecules targeting VEGF and corresponding receptors and ligands therefore provides a class of novel therapeutic agents that can be used in the diagnosis of and the treatment of cancer, proliferative diseases, or any other disease or condition that responds to modulation of VEGF and/or VEGFr genes.

Examples:

The following are non-limiting examples showing the selection, isolation, synthesis and activity of nucleic acids of the instant invention.

Example 1: Tandem synthesis of siNA constructs

Exemplary siNA molecules of the invention are synthesized in tandem using a cleavable linker, for example, a succinyl-based linker. Tandem synthesis as described herein is followed by a one-step purification process that provides RNAi molecules in high yield. This approach is highly amenable to siNA synthesis in support of high throughput RNAi screening, and can be readily adapted to multi-column or multi-well synthesis platforms.

After completing a tandem synthesis of a siNA oligo and its complement in which the 5'-terminal dimethoxytrityl (5'-O-DMT) group remains intact (trityl on synthesis), the oligonucleotides are deprotected as described above. Following deprotection, the siNA sequence strands are allowed to spontaneously hybridize. This hybridization yields a duplex in which one strand has retained the 5'-O-DMT group while the complementary strand comprises a terminal 5'-hydroxyl. The newly formed duplex behaves as a single molecule during routine solid-phase extraction purification (Trityl-On purification) even though only one molecule has a dimethoxytrityl group. Because the strands form a

stable duplex, this dimethoxytrityl group (or an equivalent group, such as other trityl groups or other hydrophobic moieties) is all that is required to purify the pair of oligos, for example, by using a C18 cartridge.

Standard phosphoramidite synthesis chemistry is used up to the point of introducing a tandem linker, such as an inverted deoxy abasic succinate or glyceryl succinate linker (see **Figure 1**) or an equivalent cleavable linker. A non-limiting example of linker coupling conditions that can be used includes a hindered base such as diisopropylethylamine (DIPA) and/or DMAP in the presence of an activator reagent such as Bromotripyrrolidinophosphoniumhexaflurorophosphate (PyBrOP). After the linker is coupled, standard synthesis chemistry is utilized to complete synthesis of the second sequence leaving the terminal the 5'-O-DMT intact. Following synthesis, the resulting oligonucleotide is deprotected according to the procedures described herein and quenched with a suitable buffer, for example with 50mM NaOAc or 1.5M NH₄H₂CO₃.

Purification of the siNA duplex can be readily accomplished using solid phase extraction, for example using a Waters C18 SepPak 1g cartridge conditioned with 1 column volume (CV) of acetonitrile, 2 CV H₂O, and 2 CV 50mM NaOAc. The sample is loaded and then washed with 1 CV H₂O or 50mM NaOAc. Failure sequences are eluted with 1 CV 14% ACN (Aqueous with 50mM NaOAc and 50mM NaCl). The column is then washed, for example with 1 CV H₂O followed by on-column detritylation, for example by passing 1 CV of 1% aqueous trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) over the column, then adding a second CV of 1% aqueous TFA to the column and allowing to stand for approximately 10 minutes. The remaining TFA solution is removed and the column washed with H₂O followed by 1 CV 1M NaCl and additional H₂O. The siNA duplex product is then eluted, for example, using 1 CV 20% aqueous CAN.

Figure 2 provides an example of MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry analysis of a purified siNA construct in which each peak corresponds to the calculated mass of an individual siNA strand of the siNA duplex. The same purified siNA provides three peaks when analyzed by capillary gel electrophoresis (CGE), one peak presumably corresponding to the duplex siNA, and two peaks presumably corresponding to the separate siNA sequence strands. Ion exchange HPLC analysis of the same siNA contract

only shows a single peak. Testing of the purified siNA construct using a luciferase reporter assay described below demonstrated the same RNAi activity compared to siNA constructs generated from separately synthesized oligonucleotide sequence strands.

Example 2: Identification of potential siNA target sites in any RNA sequence

5 The sequence of an RNA target of interest, such as a viral or human mRNA transcript, is screened for target sites, for example by using a computer folding algorithm. In a non-limiting example, the sequence of a gene or RNA gene transcript derived from a database, such as Genbank, is used to generate siNA targets having complementarity to the target. Such sequences can be obtained from a database, or can
10 be determined experimentally as known in the art. Target sites that are known, for example, those target sites determined to be effective target sites based on studies with other nucleic acid molecules, for example ribozymes or antisense, or those targets known to be associated with a disease or condition such as those sites containing mutations or deletions, can be used to design siNA molecules targeting those sites. Various
15 parameters can be used to determine which sites are the most suitable target sites within the target RNA sequence. These parameters include but are not limited to secondary or tertiary RNA structure, the nucleotide base composition of the target sequence, the degree of homology between various regions of the target sequence, or the relative position of the target sequence within the RNA transcript. Based on these
20 determinations, any number of target sites within the RNA transcript can be chosen to screen siNA molecules for efficacy, for example by using *in vitro* RNA cleavage assays, cell culture, or animal models. In a non-limiting example, anywhere from 1 to 1000 target sites are chosen within the transcript based on the size of the siNA construct to be used. High throughput screening assays can be developed for screening siNA molecules
25 using methods known in the art, such as with multi-well or multi-plate assays to determine efficient reduction in target gene expression.

Example 3: Selection of siNA molecule target sites in a RNA

The following non-limiting steps can be used to carry out the selection of siNAs targeting a given gene sequence or transcript.

1. The target sequence is parsed *in silico* into a list of all fragments or subsequences of
a particular length, for example 23 nucleotide fragments, contained within the target
sequence. This step is typically carried out using a custom Perl script, but
commercial sequence analysis programs such as Oligo, MacVector, or the GCG
5 Wisconsin Package can be employed as well.
2. In some instances the siNAs correspond to more than one target sequence; such
would be the case for example in targeting different transcripts of the same gene,
targeting different transcripts of more than one gene, or for targeting both the human
gene and an animal homolog. In this case, a subsequence list of a particular length is
10 generated for each of the targets, and then the lists are compared to find matching
sequences in each list. The subsequences are then ranked according to the number of
target sequences that contain the given subsequence; the goal is to find subsequences
that are present in most or all of the target sequences. Alternately, the ranking can
identify subsequences that are unique to a target sequence, such as a mutant target
15 sequence. Such an approach would enable the use of siNA to target specifically the
mutant sequence and not effect the expression of the normal sequence.
3. In some instances the siNA subsequences are absent in one or more sequences while
present in the desired target sequence; such would be the case if the siNA targets a
gene with a paralogous family member that is to remain untargeted. As in case 2
20 above, a subsequence list of a particular length is generated for each of the targets,
and then the lists are compared to find sequences that are present in the target gene
but are absent in the untargeted paralog.
4. The ranked siNA subsequences can be further analyzed and ranked according to GC
content. A preference can be given to sites containing 30-70% GC, with a further
25 preference to sites containing 40-60% GC.
5. The ranked siNA subsequences can be further analyzed and ranked according to self-
folding and internal hairpins. Weaker internal folds are preferred; strong hairpin
structures are to be avoided.
6. The ranked siNA subsequences can be further analyzed and ranked according to
30 whether they have runs of GGG or CCC in the sequence. GGG (or even more Gs) in

either strand can make oligonucleotide synthesis problematic and can potentially interfere with RNAi activity, so it is avoided whenever better sequences are available. CCC is searched in the target strand because that will place GGG in the antisense strand.

5 7. The ranked siNA subsequences can be further analyzed and ranked according to whether they have the dinucleotide UU (uridine dinucleotide) on the 3'-end of the sequence, and/or AA on the 5'-end of the sequence (to yield 3' UU on the antisense sequence). These sequences allow one to design siNA molecules with terminal TT thymidine dinucleotides.

10 8. Four or five target sites are chosen from the ranked list of subsequences as described above. For example, in subsequences having 23 nucleotides, the right 21 nucleotides of each chosen 23-mer subsequence are then designed and synthesized for the upper (sense) strand of the siNA duplex, while the reverse complement of the left 21 nucleotides of each chosen 23-mer subsequence are then designed and synthesized for the lower (antisense) strand of the siNA duplex (see **Tables II and III**). If terminal TT residues are desired for the sequence (as described in paragraph 7), then the two 3' terminal nucleotides of both the sense and antisense strands are replaced by TT prior to synthesizing the oligos.

15 9. The siNA molecules are screened in an *in vitro*, cell culture or animal model system to identify the most active siNA molecule or the most preferred target site within the target RNA sequence.

In an alternate approach, a pool of siNA constructs specific to a VEGF and/or VEGFr target sequence is used to screen for target sites in cells expressing VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA, such as HUVEC, HMVEC, or A375 cells. The general strategy used in this approach is shown in **Figure 9**. A non-limiting example of such is a pool comprising sequences having any of SEQ ID NOS 1-473. Cells expressing VEGF and/or VEGFr (e.g., HUVEC, HMVEC, or A375 cells) are transfected with the pool of siNA constructs and cells that demonstrate a phenotype associated with VEGF and/or VEGFr inhibition are sorted. The pool of siNA constructs can be expressed from transcription cassettes inserted into appropriate vectors (see for example **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**). The siNA from cells demonstrating a positive phenotypic change (e.g.,

decreased proliferation, decreased VEGF and/or VEGFr mRNA levels or decreased VEGF and/or VEGFr protein expression), are sequenced to determine the most suitable target site(s) within the target VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA sequence.

Example 4: VEGF and/or VEGFr targeted siNA design

5 siNA target sites were chosen by analyzing sequences of the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA target and optionally prioritizing the target sites on the basis of folding (structure of any given sequence analyzed to determine siNA accessibility to the target), by using a library of siNA molecules as described in Example 3, or alternately by using an *in vitro* siNA system as described in Example 6 herein. siNA molecules were designed that
10 could bind each target and are optionally individually analyzed by computer folding to assess whether the siNA molecule can interact with the target sequence. Varying the length of the siNA molecules can be chosen to optimize activity. Generally, a sufficient number of complementary nucleotide bases are chosen to bind to, or otherwise interact with, the target RNA, but the degree of complementarity can be modulated to
15 accommodate siNA duplexes or varying length or base composition. By using such methodologies, siNA molecules can be designed to target sites within any known RNA sequence, for example those RNA sequences corresponding to the any gene transcript.

Chemically modified siNA constructs are designed to provide nuclease stability for systemic administration *in vivo* and/or improved pharmacokinetic, localization, and
20 delivery properties while preserving the ability to mediate RNAi activity. Chemical modifications as described herein are introduced synthetically using synthetic methods described herein and those generally known in the art. The synthetic siNA constructs are then assayed for nuclease stability in serum and/or cellular/tissue extracts (e.g. liver extracts). The synthetic siNA constructs are also tested in parallel for RNAi activity
25 using an appropriate assay, such as a luciferase reporter assay as described herein or another suitable assay that can quantity RNAi activity. Synthetic siNA constructs that possess both nuclease stability and RNAi activity can be further modified and re-evaluated in stability and activity assays. The chemical modifications of the stabilized active siNA constructs can then be applied to any siNA sequence targeting any chosen
30 RNA and used, for example, in target screening assays to pick lead siNA compounds for therapeutic development (see for example **Figure 11**).

Example 5: Chemical Synthesis and Purification of siNA

siNA molecules can be designed to interact with various sites in the RNA message, for example, target sequences within the RNA sequences described herein. The sequence of one strand of the siNA molecule(s) is complementary to the target site 5 sequences described above. The siNA molecules can be chemically synthesized using methods described herein. Inactive siNA molecules that are used as control sequences can be synthesized by scrambling the sequence of the siNA molecules such that it is not complementary to the target sequence. Generally, siNA constructs can be synthesized using solid phase oligonucleotide synthesis methods as described herein (see for example 10 Usman *et al.*, US Patent Nos. 5,804,683; 5,831,071; 5,998,203; 6,117,657; 6,353,098; 6,362,323; 6,437,117; 6,469,158; Scaringe *et al.*, US Patent Nos. 6,111,086; 6,008,400; 6,111,086 all incorporated by reference herein in their entirety).

In a non-limiting example, RNA oligonucleotides are synthesized in a stepwise fashion using the phosphoramidite chemistry as is known in the art. Standard 15 phosphoramidite chemistry involves the use of nucleosides comprising any of 5'-O-dimethoxytrityl, 2'-O-tert-butyldimethylsilyl, 3'-O-2-Cyanoethyl N,N-diisopropylphosphoroamidite groups, and exocyclic amine protecting groups (e.g. N6-benzoyl adenosine, N4 acetyl cytidine, and N2-isobutyryl guanosine). Alternately, 2'-O-Silyl Ethers can be used in conjunction with acid-labile 2'-O-orthoester protecting groups in the synthesis of 20 RNA as described by Scaringe *supra*. Differing 2' chemistries can require different protecting groups, for example 2'-deoxy-2'-amino nucleosides can utilize N-phthaloyl protection as described by Usman *et al.*, US Patent 5,631,360, incorporated by reference herein in its entirety).

During solid phase synthesis, each nucleotide is added sequentially (3' - to 5' direction) to the solid support-bound oligonucleotide. The first nucleoside at the 3'-end 25 of the chain is covalently attached to a solid support (e.g., controlled pore glass or polystyrene) using various linkers. The nucleotide precursor, a ribonucleoside phosphoramidite, and activator are combined resulting in the coupling of the second nucleoside phosphoramidite onto the 5'-end of the first nucleoside. The support is then 30 washed and any unreacted 5'-hydroxyl groups are capped with a capping reagent such as acetic anhydride to yield inactive 5'-acetyl moieties. The trivalent phosphorus linkage is then oxidized to a more stable phosphate linkage. At the end of the nucleotide addition

cycle, the 5'-O-protecting group is cleaved under suitable conditions (e.g., acidic conditions for trityl-based groups and Fluoride for silyl-based groups). The cycle is repeated for each subsequent nucleotide.

Modification of synthesis conditions can be used to optimize coupling efficiency,
5 for example by using differing coupling times, differing reagent/phosphoramidite concentrations, differing contact times, differing solid supports and solid support linker chemistries depending on the particular chemical composition of the siNA to be synthesized. Deprotection and purification of the siNA can be performed as is generally described in Deprotection and purification of the siNA can be performed as is generally
10 described in Usman *et al.*, US 5,831,071, US 6,353,098, US 6,437,117, and Bellon *et al.*, US 6,054,576, US 6,162,909, US 6,303,773, or Scaringe *supra*, incorporated by reference herein in their entireties. Additionally, deprotection conditions can be modified to provide the best possible yield and purity of siNA constructs. For example, applicant has observed that oligonucleotides comprising 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro nucleotides
15 can degrade under inappropriate deprotection conditions. Such oligonucleotides are deprotected using aqueous methylamine at about 35°C for 30 minutes. If the 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro containing oligonucleotide also comprises ribonucleotides, after deprotection with aqueous methylamine at about 35°C for 30 minutes, TEA-HF is added and the reaction maintained at about 65°C for an additional 15 minutes.

20 Example 6: RNAi *in vitro* assay to assess siNA activity

An *in vitro* assay that recapitulates RNAi in a cell-free system is used to evaluate siNA constructs targeting VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA targets. The assay comprises the system described by Tuschl *et al.*, 1999, *Genes and Development*, 13, 3191-3197 and Zamore *et al.*, 2000, *Cell*, 101, 25-33 adapted for use with VEGF and/or VEGFr target RNA. A Drosophila extract derived from syncytial blastoderm is used to reconstitute RNAi activity *in vitro*. Target RNA is generated via *in vitro* transcription from an appropriate VEGF and/or VEGFr expressing plasmid using T7 RNA polymerase or via chemical synthesis as described herein. Sense and antisense siNA strands (for example 20 uM each) are annealed by incubation in buffer (such as 100 mM potassium acetate, 30
25 mM HEPES-KOH, pH 7.4, 2 mM magnesium acetate) for 1 minute at 90°C followed by 1 hour at 37°C , then diluted in lysis buffer (for example 100 mM potassium acetate, 30 mM HEPES-KOH at pH 7.4, 2mM magnesium acetate). Annealing can be monitored by
30

gel electrophoresis on an agarose gel in TBE buffer and stained with ethidium bromide. The Drosophila lysate is prepared using zero to two-hour-old embryos from Oregon R flies collected on yeasted molasses agar that are dechorionated and lysed. The lysate is centrifuged and the supernatant isolated. The assay comprises a reaction mixture

5 containing 50% lysate [vol/vol], RNA (10-50 pM final concentration), and 10% [vol/vol] lysis buffer containing siNA (10 nM final concentration). The reaction mixture also contains 10 mM creatine phosphate, 10 ug.ml creatine phosphokinase, 100 um GTP, 100 uM UTP, 100 uM CTP, 500 uM ATP, 5 mM DTT, 0.1 U/uL RNasin (Promega), and 100 uM of each amino acid. The final concentration of potassium acetate is adjusted to 100 mM. The reactions are pre-assembled on ice and preincubated at 25° C for 10 minutes before adding RNA, then incubated at 25° C for an additional 60 minutes. Reactions are quenched with 4 volumes of 1.25 x Passive Lysis Buffer (Promega). Target RNA cleavage is assayed by RT-PCR analysis or other methods known in the art and are compared to control reactions in which siNA is omitted from the reaction.

15 Alternately, internally-labeled target RNA for the assay is prepared by *in vitro* transcription in the presence of [α - 32 P] CTP, passed over a G 50 Sephadex column by spin chromatography and used as target RNA without further purification. Optionally, target RNA is 5'- 32 P-end labeled using T4 polynucleotide kinase enzyme. Assays are performed as described above and target RNA and the specific RNA cleavage

20 products generated by RNAi are visualized on an autoradiograph of a gel. The percentage of cleavage is determined by Phosphor Imager® quantitation of bands representing intact control RNA or RNA from control reactions without siNA and the cleavage products generated by the assay.

 In one embodiment, this assay is used to determine target sites the VEGF and/or

25 VEGFr RNA target for siNA mediated RNAi cleavage, wherein a plurality of siNA constructs are screened for RNAi mediated cleavage of the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA target, for example, by analyzing the assay reaction by electrophoresis of labeled target RNA, or by northern blotting, as well as by other methodology well known in the art.

Example 7: Nucleic acid inhibition of VEGF and/or VEGFr target RNA *in vivo*

siNA molecules targeted to the human VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA are designed and synthesized as described above. These nucleic acid molecules can be tested for cleavage activity *in vivo*, for example, using the following procedure. The target sequences and the nucleotide location within the VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA are given in
5 **Table II and III.**

Two formats are used to test the efficacy of siNAs targeting VEGF and/or VEGFr. First, the reagents are tested in cell culture using, for example, HUVEC, HMVEC, HE LA or A375 cells to determine the extent of RNA and protein inhibition. siNA reagents (*e.g.*; see **Tables II and III**) are selected against the VEGF and/or VEGFr target
10 as described herein. RNA inhibition is measured after delivery of these reagents by a suitable transfection agent to, for example, HUVEC, HMVEC, HE LA or A375 cells. Relative amounts of target RNA are measured versus actin using real-time PCR monitoring of amplification (*eg.*, ABI 7700 Taqman®). A comparison is made to a mixture of oligonucleotide sequences made to unrelated targets or to a randomized siNA
15 control with the same overall length and chemistry, but randomly substituted at each position. Primary and secondary lead reagents are chosen for the target and optimization performed. After an optimal transfection agent concentration is chosen, a RNA time-course of inhibition is performed with the lead siNA molecule. In addition, a cell-plating format can be used to determine RNA inhibition.
20

Delivery of siNA to Cells

Cells (*e.g.*, HUVEC, HMVEC, HE LA or A375 cells) are seeded, for example, at 1×10^5 cells per well of a six-well dish in EGM-2 (BioWhittaker) the day before transfection. siNA (final concentration, for example 20nM) and cationic lipid (*e.g.*, final concentration 2 μ g/ml) are complexed in EGM basal media (Biowhittaker) at 37°C for 30
25 minutes in polystyrene tubes. Following vortexing, the complexed siNA is added to each well and incubated for the times indicated. For initial optimization experiments, cells are seeded, for example, at 1×10^3 in 96 well plates and siNA complex added as described. Efficiency of delivery of siNA to cells is determined using a fluorescent siNA complexed with lipid. Cells in 6-well dishes are incubated with siNA for 24 hours, rinsed with PBS
30 and fixed in 2% paraformaldehyde for 15 minutes at room temperature. Uptake of siNA is visualized using a fluorescent microscope.

Taqman and Lightcycler quantification of mRNA

Total RNA is prepared from cells following siRNA delivery, for example, using Qiagen RNA purification kits for 6-well or Rneasy extraction kits for 96-well assays. For Taqman analysis, dual-labeled probes are synthesized with the reporter dye, FAM or 5 JOE, covalently linked at the 5'-end and the quencher dye TAMRA conjugated to the 3'- end. One-step RT-PCR amplifications are performed on, for example, an ABI PRISM 7700 Sequence Detector using 50 µl reactions consisting of 10 µl total RNA, 100 nM forward primer, 900 nM reverse primer, 100 nM probe, 1X TaqMan PCR reaction buffer (PE-Applied Biosystems), 5.5 mM MgCl₂, 300 µM each dATP, dCTP, dGTP, and dTTP, 10 10U RNase Inhibitor (Promega), 1.25U AmpliTaq Gold (PE-Applied Biosystems) and 10U M-MLV Reverse Transcriptase (Promega). The thermal cycling conditions can consist of 30 minutes at 48°C, 10 minutes at 95°C, followed by 40 cycles of 15 seconds at 95°C and 1 minute at 60°C. Quantitation of mRNA levels is determined relative to standards generated from serially diluted total cellular RNA (300, 100, 33, 11 ng/rxn) 15 and normalizing to β-actin or GAPDH mRNA in parallel TaqMan reactions. For each gene of interest an upper and lower primer and a fluorescently labeled probe are designed. Real time incorporation of SYBR Green I dye into a specific PCR product can be measured in glass capillary tubes using a lightcycler. A standard curve is generated for each primer pair using control cRNA. Values are represented as relative expression to 20 GAPDH in each sample.

Western blotting

Nuclear extracts can be prepared using a standard micro preparation technique (see for example Andrews and Faller, 1991, *Nucleic Acids Research*, 19, 2499). Protein extracts from supernatants are prepared, for example using TCA precipitation. An equal 25 volume of 20% TCA is added to the cell supernatant, incubated on ice for 1 hour and pelleted by centrifugation for 5 minutes. Pellets are washed in acetone, dried and resuspended in water. Cellular protein extracts are run on a 10% Bis-Tris NuPage (nuclear extracts) or 4-12% Tris-Glycine (supernatant extracts) polyacrylamide gel and transferred onto nitro-cellulose membranes. Non-specific binding can be blocked by 30 incubation, for example, with 5% non-fat milk for 1 hour followed by primary antibody for 16 hour at 4°C. Following washes, the secondary antibody is applied, for example

(1:10,000 dilution) for 1 hour at room temperature and the signal detected with SuperSignal reagent (Pierce).

Example 8: Animal Models useful to evaluate the down-regulation of VEGF and/or VEGFr gene expression

5 There are several animal models in which the anti-angiogenesis effect of nucleic acids of the present invention, such as siNA, directed against VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 mRNAs can be tested. Typically a corneal model has been used to study angiogenesis in rat and rabbit since recruitment of vessels can easily be followed in this normally avascular tissue (Pandey *et al.*, 1995 *Science* 268: 567-569). In these
10 models, a small Teflon or Hydron disk pretreated with an angiogenesis factor (e.g. bFGF or VEGF) is inserted into a pocket surgically created in the cornea. Angiogenesis is monitored 3 to 5 days later. siNA directed against VEGF, VEGFr1, VEGFr2 and/or VEGFr3 mRNAs are delivered in the disk as well, or dropwise to the eye over the time course of the experiment. In another eye model, hypoxia has been shown to cause both
15 increased expression of VEGF and neovascularization in the retina (Pierce *et al.*, 1995 *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA.* 92: 905-909; Shweiki *et al.*, 1992 *J. Clin. Invest.* 91: 2235-2243).

In human glioblastomas, it has been shown that VEGF is at least partially responsible for tumor angiogenesis (Plate *et al.*, 1992 *Nature* 359, 845). Animal models
20 have been developed in which glioblastoma cells are implanted subcutaneously into nude mice and the progress of tumor growth and angiogenesis is studied (Kim *et al.*, 1993 *supra*; Millauer *et al.*, 1994 *supra*).

Another animal model that addresses neovascularization involves Matrigel, an extract of basement membrane that becomes a solid gel when injected subcutaneously
25 (Passaniti *et al.*, 1992 *Lab. Invest.* 67: 519-528). When the Matrigel is supplemented with angiogenesis factors such as VEGF, vessels grow into the Matrigel over a period of 3 to 5 days and angiogenesis can be assessed. Again, nucleic acids directed against VEGFr mRNAs are delivered in the Matrigel.

Several animal models exist for screening of anti-angiogenic agents. These
30 include corneal vessel formation following corneal injury (Burger *et al.*, 1985 *Cornea* 4:

35-41; Lepri, *et al.*, 1994 *J. Ocular Pharmacol.* 10: 273-280; Ormerod *et al.*, 1990 *Am. J. Pathol.* 137: 1243-1252) or intracorneal growth factor implant (Grant *et al.*, 1993 *Diabetologia* 36: 282-291; Pandey *et al.* 1995 *supra*; Zieche *et al.*, 1992 *Lab. Invest.* 67: 711-715), vessel growth into Matrigel matrix containing growth factors (Passaniti *et al.*, 1992 *supra*), female reproductive organ neovascularization following hormonal manipulation (Shweiki *et al.*, 1993 *Clin. Invest.* 91: 2235-2243), several models involving inhibition of tumor growth in highly vascularized solid tumors (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1994 *Cell* 79: 315-328; Senger *et al.*, 1993 *Cancer and Metas. Rev.* 12: 303-324; Takahasi *et al.*, 1994 *Cancer Res.* 54: 4233-4237; Kim *et al.*, 1993 *supra*), and transient hypoxia-induced neovascularization in the mouse retina (Pierce *et al.*, 1995 *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA.* 92: 905-909). Other model systems to study tumor angiogenesis are reviewed by Folkman, 1985 *Adv. Cancer. Res.* 43, 175.

Ocular Models of Angiogenesis

The cornea model, described in Pandey *et al. supra*, is the most common and well characterized model for screening anti-angiogenic agent efficacy. This model involves an avascular tissue into which vessels are recruited by a stimulating agent (growth factor, thermal or alkalai burn, endotoxin). The corneal model utilizes the intrastromal corneal implantation of a Teflon pellet soaked in a VEGF-Hydrone solution to recruit blood vessels toward the pellet, which can be quantitated using standard microscopic and image analysis techniques. To evaluate their anti-angiogenic efficacy, nucleic acids are applied topically to the eye or bound within Hydrone on the Teflon pellet itself. This avascular cornea as well as the Matrigel (see below) provide for low background assays. While the corneal model has been performed extensively in the rabbit, studies in the rat have also been conducted.

The mouse model (Passaniti *et al.*, *supra*) is a non-tissue model that utilizes Matrigel, an extract of basement membrane (Kleinman *et al.*, 1986) or Millipore® filter disk, which can be impregnated with growth factors and anti-angiogenic agents in a liquid form prior to injection. Upon subcutaneous administration at body temperature, the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk forms a solid implant. VEGF embedded in the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk is used to recruit vessels within the matrix of the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk which can be processed histologically for endothelial

cell specific vWF (factor VIII antigen) immunohistochemistry, Trichrome-Masson stain, or hemoglobin content. Like the cornea, the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk is avascular; however, it is not tissue. In the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk model, nucleic acids are administered within the matrix of the Matrigel or Millipore® filter disk 5 to test their anti-angiogenic efficacy. Thus, delivery issues in this model, as with delivery of nucleic acids by Hydron- coated Teflon pellets in the rat cornea model, may be less problematic due to the homogeneous presence of the nucleic acid within the respective matrix.

Additionally, siNA molecules of the invention targeting VEGF and/or VEGFr (e.g. 10 VEGFR1, VEGFR2, and/or VEGFR3) can be assessed for activity transgenic mice to determine whether modulation of VEGF and/or VEGFr can inhibit optic neovascularization. Animal models of choroidal neovascularization are described in, for example, Mori *et al.*, 2001, *Journal of Cellular Physiology*, 188, 253; Mori *et al.*, 2001, *American Journal of Pathology*, 159, 313; Ohno-Matsui *et al.*, 2002, *American Journal 15 of Pathology*, 160, 711; and Kwak *et al.*, 2000, *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*, 41, 3158. VEGF plays a central role in causing retinal neovascularization. Increased expression of VEGFR2 in retinal photoreceptors of transgenic mice stimulates neovascularization within the retina, and a blockade of VEGFR2 signaling has been shown to inhibit retinal choroidal neovascularization (CNV) (Mori *et al.*, 2001, *J. Cell. 20 Physiol.*, 188, 253).

CNV is laser induced in, for example, adult C57BL/6 mice. The mice are also given an intravitreous, periocular or a subretinal injection of VEGF and/or VEGFr (e.g., VEGFR2) siNA in each eye. Intravitreous injections are made using a Harvard pump microinjection apparatus and pulled glass micropipets. Then a micropipette is passed 25 through the sclera just behind the limbus into the vitreous cavity. The subretinal injections are made using a condensing lens system on a dissecting microscope. The pipet tip is then passed through the sclera posterior to the limbus and positioned above the retina. Five days after the injection of the vector the mice are anesthetized with ketamine hydrochloride (100 mg/kg body weight), 1% tropicamide is also used to dilate 30 the pupil, and a diode laser photocoagulation is used to rupture Bruch's membrane at three locations in each eye. A slit lamp delivery system and a hand-held cover slide are

used for laser photocoagulation. Burns are made in the 9, 12, and 3 o'clock positions 2-3 disc diameters from the optic nerve (Mori *et al.*, *supra*).

The mice typically develop subretinal neovascularization due to the expression of VEGF in photoreceptors beginning at prenatal day 7. At prenatal day 21, the mice are 5 anesthetized and perfused with 1 ml of phosphate-buffered saline containing 50 mg/ml of fluorescein-labeled dextran. Then the eyes are removed and placed for 1 hour in a 10% phosphate-buffered formalin. The retinas are removed and examined by fluorescence microscopy (Mori *et al.*, *supra*).

Fourteen days after the laser induced rupture of Bruch's membrane, the eyes that 10 received intravitreous and subretinal injection of siNA are evaluated for smaller appearing areas of CNV, while control eyes are evaluated for large areas of CNV. The eyes that receive intravitreous injections or a subretinal injection of siNA are also evaluated for fewer areas of neovascularization on the outer surface of the retina and potential abortive sprouts from deep retinal capillaries that do not reach the retinal surface 15 compared to eyes that did not receive an injection of siNA.

Tumor Models of Angiogenesis

Use of murine models

For a typical systemic study involving 10 mice (20 g each) per dose group, 5 doses (1, 3, 10, 30 and 100 mg/kg daily over 14 days continuous administration), 20 approximately 400 mg of siNA, formulated in saline is used. A similar study in young adult rats (200 g) requires over 4 g. Parallel pharmacokinetic studies involve the use of similar quantities of siNA further justifying the use of murine models.

Lewis lung carcinoma and B-16 melanoma murine models

Identifying a common animal model for systemic efficacy testing of nucleic acids is 25 an efficient way of screening siNA for systemic efficacy.

The Lewis lung carcinoma and B-16 murine melanoma models are well accepted models of primary and metastatic cancer and are used for initial screening of anti-cancer agents. These murine models are not dependent upon the use of immunodeficient mice, are relatively inexpensive, and minimize housing concerns. Both the Lewis lung and B-

16 melanoma models involve subcutaneous implantation of approximately 10^6 tumor
cells from metastatically aggressive tumor cell lines (Lewis lung lines 3LL or D122,
LLc-LN7; B-16-BL6 melanoma) in C57BL/6J mice. Alternatively, the Lewis lung
model can be produced by the surgical implantation of tumor spheres (approximately 0.8
5 mm in diameter). Metastasis also can be modeled by injecting the tumor cells directly
intravenously. In the Lewis lung model, microscopic metastases can be observed
approximately 14 days following implantation with quantifiable macroscopic metastatic
tumors developing within 21-25 days. The B-16 melanoma exhibits a similar time course
with tumor neovascularization beginning 4 days following implantation. Since both
10 primary and metastatic tumors exist in these models after 21-25 days in the same animal,
multiple measurements can be taken as indices of efficacy. Primary tumor volume and
growth latency as well as the number of micro- and macroscopic metastatic lung foci or
number of animals exhibiting metastases can be quantitated. The percent increase in
lifespan can also be measured. Thus, these models provide suitable primary efficacy
15 assays for screening systemically administered siNA nucleic acids and siNA nucleic acid
formulations.

In the Lewis lung and B-16 melanoma models, systemic pharmacotherapy with a
wide variety of agents usually begins 1-7 days following tumor implantation/inoculation
with either continuous or multiple administration regimens. Concurrent pharmacokinetic
20 studies can be performed to determine whether sufficient tissue levels of siNA can be
achieved for pharmacodynamic effect to be expected. Furthermore, primary tumors and
secondary lung metastases can be removed and subjected to a variety of *in vitro* studies
(*i.e.* target RNA reduction).

In addition, animal models are useful in screening compounds, eg. siNA
25 molecules, for efficacy in treating renal failure, such as a result of autosomal dominant
polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD). The Han:SPRD rat model, mice with a targeted
mutation in the Pkd2 gene and congenital polycystic kidney (cpk) mice, closely resemble
human ADPKD and provide animal models to evaluate the therapeutic effect of siNA
constructs that have the potential to interfere with one or more of the pathogenic
30 elements of ADPKD mediated renal failure, such as angiogenesis. Angiogenesis may be
necessary in the progression of ADPKD for growth of cyst cells as well as increased
vascular permeability promoting fluid secretion into cysts. Proliferation of cystic

epithelium is also a feature of ADPKD because cyst cells in culture produce soluble vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). VEGFr1 has also been detected in epithelial cells of cystic tubules but not in endothelial cells in the vasculature of cystic kidneys or normal kidneys. VEGFr2 expression is increased in endothelial cells of cyst vessels and

5 in endothelial cells during renal ischemia-reperfusion. It is proposed that inhibition of VEGF receptors with anti-VEGFr1 and anti-VEGFr2 siNA molecules would attenuate cyst formation, renal failure and mortality in ADPKD. Anti-VEGFr2 siNA molecules would therefore be designed to inhibit angiogenesis involved in cyst formation. As VEGFr1 is present in cystic epithelium and not in vascular endothelium of cysts, it is

10 proposed that anti-VEGFr1 siNA molecules would attenuate cystic epithelial cell proliferation and apoptosis which would in turn lead to less cyst formation. Further, it is proposed that VEGF produced by cystic epithelial cells is one of the stimuli for angiogenesis as well as epithelial cell proliferation and apoptosis. The use of Han:SPRD rats (see for example Kaspareit-Rittinghausen *et al.*, 1991, *Am.J.Pathol.* 139, 693-696),

15 mice with a targeted mutation in the Pkd2 gene (Pkd2^{-/-} mice, see for example Wu *et al.*, 2000, *Nat.Genet.* 24, 75-78) and cpk mice (see for example Woo *et al.*, 1994, *Nature*, 368, 750-753) all provide animal models to study the efficacy of siNA molecules of the invention against VEGFr1 and VEGFr2 mediated renal failure.

VEGF, VEGFr1 VGFR2 and/or VEGFr3 protein levels can be measured clinically

20 or experimentally by FACS analysis. VEGF, VEGFr1 VGFR2 and/or VEGFr3 encoded mRNA levels are assessed by Northern analysis, RNase-protection, primer extension analysis and/or quantitative RT-PCR. siNA nucleic acids that block VEGF, VEGFr1 VGFR2 and/or VEGFr3 protein encoding mRNAs and therefore result in decreased levels of VEGF, VEGFr1 VGFR2 and/or VEGFr3 activity by more than 20% *in vitro* can

25 be identified.

Example 9: RNAi mediated inhibition of VEGFr expression in cell culture

Inhibition of VEGF1 RNA expression using siNA targeting VEGF RNA

siNA constructs (**Table III**) are tested for efficacy in reducing VEGF and/or VEGFr RNA expression in, for example, HUVEC, HMVEC, HELO or A375 cells.

30 Cells are plated approximately 24 hours before transfection in 96-well plates at 5,000-7,500 cells/well, 100 µl/well, such that at the time of transfection cells are 70-90%

confluent. For transfection, annealed siRNAs are mixed with the transfection reagent (Lipofectamine 2000, Invitrogen) in a volume of 50 µl/well and incubated for 20 min. at room temperature. The siRNA transfection mixtures are added to cells to give a final siRNA concentration of 25 nM in a volume of 150 µl. Each siRNA transfection mixture is
 5 added to 3 wells for triplicate siRNA treatments. Cells are incubated at 37° for 24h in the continued presence of the siRNA transfection mixture. At 24h, RNA is prepared from each well of treated cells. The supernatants with the transfection mixtures are first removed and discarded, then the cells are lysed and RNA prepared from each well. Target gene expression following treatment is evaluated by RT-PCR for the target gene
 10 and for a control gene (36B4, an RNA polymerase subunit) for normalization. The triplicate data is averaged and the standard deviations determined for each treatment. Normalized data are graphed and the percent reduction of target mRNA by active siRNAs in comparison to their respective inverted control siRNAs is determined.

Figure 14 shows a non-limiting example of the reduction of VEGF mRNA in
 15 HELA cells mediated by siRNAs that target VEGF mRNA. HELA cells were transfected with 0.25 ug/well of lipid complexed with 25 nM siRNA. **Figure 14 A** shows results of a screen of siRNA constructs referred to by Compound number (sense/antisense, see **Table III**) comprising Stab 0/0 and Stab 9/10 chemistry (**Table IV**). **Figure 14 B** shows results of a screen of siRNA constructs referred to by Compound number (sense/antisense,
 20 see **Table III**) comprising Stab 7/8 chemistry (**Table IV**). In the two studies, active siRNA constructs were compared to untreated cells, matched chemistry inverted control siRNA constructs, and cells transfected with lipid alone (transfection control). It should be noted that treatment with lipid results in up-regulation of VEGF expression compared to untreated cells, therefore, a decrease in VEGF expression between the transfection
 25 control and active siRNA as compared to inverted controls indicates activity. As shown in the figures, the siRNA constructs significantly reduce VEGF RNA expression. Additional stabilization chemistries as described in **Table IV** are similarly assayed for activity.

Inhibition of VEGF and VEGFr1, VEGFr2, and/or VEGFr3 (VEGFr) RNA expression using siRNA targeting VEGF and VEGFr homologous RNA sequences

30 VEGF and VEGFr RNA levels are assessed in HEPA or HAEC cells 24 hours after treatment with siRNA molecules targeting sequences having VEGF and VEGFr

homology. HAEC cells are transfected with 0.25-1.5 ug/well of lipid complexed with 25 nM siNA. Activity of the siNA molecules is shown compared to matched chemistry inverted siNA controls, untreated cells, and cells treated with lipid only (transfection control). Levels of VEGF and VEGFr RNA and/or protein are measured by Taqman lightcycler quantitation or Elisa and leads identified for subsequent screening in appropriate animal models.

Example 10: siNA-mediated inhibition of angiogenesis *in vivo*

Evaluation of siNA molecules in the rat cornea model of VEGF induced angiogenesis

Intraocular Administration of siNA

Female C57BL/6 mice (4-5 weeks old) are anesthetized with a 0.2 ml of a mixture of ketamine/xylazine (8:1), and the pupils are dilated with a single drop of 1% tropicamide. Then a 532nm diode laser photocoagulation (75 μ m spot size, 0.1-second duration, 120 mW) is used to generate three laser spots in each eye surrounding the optic nerve by using a hand-held coverslip as a contact lens. A bubble forms at the laser spot indicating a rupture of the Bruch's membrane. Next, the laser spots are evaluated for the presence of CNV on day 17 after laser treatment.

After laser induction of multiple CNV lesions in mice, the VEGF siNA is administered by intraocular injections under a dissecting microscope. Intravitreous injections are performed with a Harvard pump microinjection apparatus and pulled glass micropipets. Each micropipet is calibrated to deliver 1 μ L of vehicle containing 0.5 ug or 1.5 ug of siNA, inverted control siNA, or saline. The mice are anesthetized, pupils are dilated, and, the sharpened tip of the micropipet is passed through the sclera, just behind the limbus into the vitreous cavity, and the foot switch is depressed. The injection is repeated at day 7 after laser photocoagulation.

At the time of death, mice are anesthetized (ketamine/xylazine mixture, 8:1) and perfused through the heart with 1 ml PBS containing 50 mg/ml fluorescein-labeled dextran (FITC-Dextran, 2 million average molecular weight, Sigma). The eyes are removed and fixed for overnight in 1% phosphate-buffered 4% Formalin. The cornea and the lens are removed and the neurosensory retina is carefully dissected from the eyecup. Five radial cuts are made from the edge of the eyecup to the equator; the sclera-

choroid-retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) complex is flat-mounted, with the sclera facing down, on a glass slide in Aquamount. Flat mounts are examined with a Nikon fluorescence microscope. A laser spot with green vessels is scored CNV-positive, and a laser spot lacking green vessels is scored CNV-negative. Flatmounts are examined by 5 fluorescence microscopy (Axioskop; Carl Zeiss, Thornwood, NY), and images are digitized with a three-color charge-coupled device (CCD) video camera and a frame grabber. Image-analysis software (Image-Pro Plus; Media Cybernetics, Silver Spring, MD) is used to measure the total area of hyperfluorescence associated with each burn, corresponding to the total fibrovascular scar. The areas within each eye are averaged to 10 give one experimental value per eye for plotting the areas.

Measurement of VEGF expression is also determined using RT-PCR and/or real-time PCR. Retinal RNA is isolated by a Rnaeasy kit, and reverse transcription is performed with approximately 0.5 µg total RNA, reverse transcriptase (SuperScript II), and 5.0 µM oligo-d(T) primer. PCR amplification is performed using primers specific 15 for VEGF, and. Titrations are determined to ensure that PCR reactions are performed in the linear range of amplification. Mouse S16 ribosomal protein primers are used to provide an internal control for the amount of template in the PCR reactions.

Periocular Administration of siNA

Female C57BL/6 mice (4-5 weeks old) are anesthetized with a 0.2 ml of a 20 mixture of ketamine/xylazine (8:1), and the pupils are dilated with a single drop of 1% tropicamide. Then a 532nm diode laser photocoagulation (75 µm spot size, 0.1-s duration, 120 mW) is used to generate three laser spots in each eye surrounding the optic nerve by using a hand-held coverslip as a contact lens. A bubble forms at the laser spot indicating a rupture of the Bruch's membrane. Next, the laser spots are evaluated for the 25 presence of CNV on day 17 after laser treatment.

After laser induction of multiple CNV lesions in mice, the VEGF siNA is administered via periocular injections under a dissecting microscope. Periocular injections are performed with a Harvard pump microinjection apparatus and pulled glass 30 micropipets. Each micropipet is calibrated to deliver 5 µL of vehicle containing test siNA at concentrations of 0.5 ug or 1.5 ug of siNA. The mice are anesthetized, pupils are dilated, and, the sharpened tip of the micropipet is passed, and the foot switch is

depressed. Periocular injections are given daily starting at day 1 through day 14 after laser photocoagulation.

At the time of death, mice are anesthetized (ketamine/xylazine mixture, 8:1) and perfused through the heart with 1 mL PBS containing 50 mg/mL fluorescein-labeled dextran (FITC-Dextran, 2 million average molecular weight, Sigma). The eyes are removed and fixed overnight in 1% phosphate-buffered 4% Formalin. The cornea and the lens are removed and the neurosensory retina is carefully dissected from the eyecup. Five radial cuts are made from the edge of the eyecup to the equator; the sclera-choroid-retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) complex is flat-mounted, with the sclera facing down, on a glass slide in Aquamount. Flat mounts are examined with a Nikon fluorescence microscope. A laser spot with green vessels is scored CNV-positive, and a laser spot lacking green vessels is scored CNV-negative. Flatmounts are examined by fluorescence microscopy (Axioskop; Carl Zeiss, Thornwood, NY) and images are digitized with a three-color charge-coupled device (CCD) video camera and a frame grabber. Image-analysis software (Image-Pro Plus; Media Cybernetics, Silver Spring, MD) is used to measure the total area of hyperfluorescence associated with each burn, corresponding to the total fibrovascular scar. The areas within each eye are averaged to give one experimental value per eye.

Evaluation of siNA molecules in the mouse 4T1-luciferase mammary carcinoma syngeneic tumor model

The current study is designed to determine if systemically administered siNA directed against VEGF inhibits the growth of subcutaneous tumors. Test compounds include active siNA targeting VEGFR RNA, matched chemistry inactive inverted controls, and saline. Animal subjects are female Balb/c mice approximately 20-25 g (5-7 weeks old). The number of subjects tested is typically about 40 mice that are housed in groups of four. The feed, water, temperature and humidity conditions follow Pharmacology Testing Facility performance standards (SOP's) which are in accordance with the 1996 Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (NRC). Animals are acclimated to the facility for at least 3 days prior to experimentation. During this time, animals are observed for overall health and sentinels are bled for baseline serology. 4T1-luc mammary carcinoma tumor cells are maintained in cell culture until injection into

animals used in the study. On day 0 of the study, animals are anesthetized with ketamine/xylazine and 1.0×10^6 cells in an injection volume of $100 \mu\text{l}$ are subcutaneously inoculated in the right flank. Primary tumor volume is measured using microcalipers. Length and width measurements are obtained from each tumor 3x/week
5 (M,W,F) beginning 3 days after inoculation up through and including 21 days after inoculation. Tumor volumes are calculated from the length/width measurements according to the equation: Tumor volume = (a) (b)²/2 where a=the long axis of the tumor and b= the shorter axis of the tumor. Tumors are allowed to grow for a period of 3 days prior to dosing. Dosing consisted of a daily intravenous tail vein injection of the
10 test compounds for 18 days. On day 21, animals are euthanized 24 hours following the last dose of test compound, or when the animals began to exhibit signs of moribundity (such as weight loss, lethargia, lack of grooming etc.) using CO₂ inhalation and lungs were subsequently removed. Lung metastases were counted under a Leitz dissecting microscope at 25X magnification. Tumors were removed and flash frozen in LN₂ for
15 analysis of immunohistochemical endpoints or mRNA levels. Results are shown in **Figure 20**. As shown in the Figure, the active siNA construct inhibited tumor growth by 50% compared to the inactive control siNA construct. In addition, levels of soluble VEGFr1 in plasma were assessed in mice treated with the active and inverted control siNA constructs. **Figure 21** shows results in the reduction of soluble VEGFr1 serum
20 levels in the mouse 4T1-luciferase mammary carcinoma syngeneic tumor model using active Stab 9/10 siNA targeting site 349 of VEGFr-1 RNA (Compound # 31270/31273) compared to a matched chemistry inactive inverted control siNA (Compound # 31276/31279). As shown in **Figure 21**, the active siNA construct is effective in reducing soluble VEGFr1 serum levels in this model

25 Example 11: Indications

The present body of knowledge in VEGF and/or VEGFr research indicates the need for methods to assay VEGF and/or VEGFr activity and for compounds that can regulate VEGF and/or VEGFr expression for research, diagnostic, and therapeutic use. As described herein, the nucleic acid molecules of the present invention can be used in
30 assays to diagnose disease state related of VEGF and/or VEGFr levels. In addition, the nucleic acid molecules can be used to treat disease state related to VEGF and/or VEGFr levels.

Particular conditions and disease states that can be associated with VEGF and/or VEGFr expression modulation include, but are not limited to:

1) Tumor angiogenesis: Angiogenesis has been shown to be necessary for tumors to grow into pathological size (Folkman, 1971, *PNAS* 76, 5217-5221; Wellstein & Czubayko, 1996, *Breast Cancer Res and Treatment* 38, 109-119). In addition, it allows tumor cells to travel through the circulatory system during metastasis. Increased levels of gene expression of a number of angiogenic factors such as vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) have been reported in vascularized and edema-associated brain tumors (Berkman *et al.*, 1993 *J. Clin. Invest.* 91, 153). A more direct demonstration of the role of VEGF in tumor angiogenesis was demonstrated by Jim Kim *et al.*, 1993 *Nature* 362,841 wherein, monoclonal antibodies against VEGF were successfully used to inhibit the growth of rhabdomyosarcoma, glioblastoma multiforme cells in nude mice. Similarly, expression of a dominant negative mutated form of the flt-1 VEGF receptor inhibits vascularization induced by human glioblastoma cells in nude mice (Millauer *et al.*, 1994, *Nature* 367, 576). Specific tumor/cancer types that can be targeted using the nucleic acid molecules of the invention include but are not limited to the tumor/cancer types described herein.

2) Ocular diseases: Neovascularization has been shown to cause or exacerbate ocular diseases including, but not limited to, macular degeneration (e.g., age related macular degeneration, AMD), neovascular glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, myopic degeneration, and trachoma (Norrby, 1997, *APMIS* 105, 417-437). Aiello *et al.*, 1994 *New Engl. J. Med.* 331, 1480, showed that the ocular fluid of a majority of patients suffering from diabetic retinopathy and other retinal disorders contains a high concentration of VEGF. Miller *et al.*, 1994 *Am. J. Pathol.* 145, 574, reported elevated levels of VEGF mRNA in patients suffering from retinal ischemia. These observations support a direct role for VEGF in ocular diseases. Other factors, including those that stimulate VEGF synthesis, may also contribute to these indications.

3) Dermatological Disorders: Many indications have been identified which may beangiogenesis dependent, including but not limited to, psoriasis, verruca vulgaris, angiofibroma of tuberous sclerosis, pot-wine stains, Sturge Weber syndrome, Kippel-Trenaunay-Weber syndrome, and Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome (Norrby, *supra*).

Intradermal injection of the angiogenic factor b-FGF demonstrated angiogenesis in nude mice (Weckbecker et al., 1992, *Angiogenesis: Key principles-Science-Technology-Medicine*, ed R. Steiner). Detmar et al., 1994 *J. Exp. Med.* 180, 1141 reported that VEGF and its receptors were over-expressed in psoriatic skin and psoriatic dermal microvessels, suggesting that VEGF plays a significant role in psoriasis.

4) Rheumatoid arthritis: Immunohistochemistry and *in situ* hybridization studies on tissues from the joints of patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis show an increased level of VEGF and its receptors (Fava et al., 1994 *J. Exp. Med.* 180, 341). Additionally, Koch et al., 1994 *J. Immunol.* 152, 4149, found that VEGF-specific antibodies were able to significantly reduce the mitogenic activity of synovial tissues from patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. These observations support a direct role for VEGF in rheumatoid arthritis. Other angiogenic factors including those of the present invention may also be involved in arthritis.

5) Endometriosis: Various studies indicate that VEGF is directly implicated in endometriosis. In one study, VEGF concentrations measured by ELISA in peritoneal fluid were found to be significantly higher in women with endometriosis than in women without endometriosis (24.1 ± 15 ng/ml vs 13.3 ± 7.2 ng/ml in normals). In patients with endometriosis, higher concentrations of VEGF were detected in the proliferative phase of the menstrual cycle (33 ± 13 ng/ml) compared to the secretory phase (10.7 ± 5 ng/ml). The cyclic variation was not noted in fluid from normal patients (McLaren et al., 1996, *Human Reprod.* 11, 220-223). In another study, women with moderate to severe endometriosis had significantly higher concentrations of peritoneal fluid VEGF than women without endometriosis. There was a positive correlation between the severity of endometriosis and the concentration of VEGF in peritoneal fluid. In human endometrial biopsies, VEGF expression increased relative to the early proliferative phase approximately 1.6-, 2-, and 3.6-fold in midproliferative, late proliferative, and secretory endometrium (Shifren et al., 1996, *J. Clin. Endocrinol. Metab.* 81, 3112-3118). In a third study, VEGF-positive staining of human ectopic endometrium was shown to be localized to macrophages (double immunofluorescent staining with CD14 marker). Peritoneal fluid macrophages demonstrated VEGF staining in women with and without endometriosis. However, increased activation of macrophages (acid phosphatase activity) was demonstrated in fluid from women with endometriosis compared with

controls. Peritoneal fluid macrophage conditioned media from patients with endometriosis resulted in significantly increased cell proliferation ($[^3\text{H}]$ thymidine incorporation) in HUVEC cells compared to controls. The percentage of peritoneal fluid macrophages with VEGFr2 mRNA was higher during the secretory phase, and
5 significantly higher in fluid from women with endometriosis ($80 \pm 15\%$) compared with controls ($32 \pm 20\%$). Flt-mRNA was detected in peritoneal fluid macrophages from women with and without endometriosis, but there was no difference between the groups or any evidence of cyclic dependence (McLaren *et al.*, 1996, *J. Clin. Invest.* 98, 482-489). In the early proliferative phase of the menstrual cycle, VEGF has been found to
10 be expressed in secretory columnar epithelium (estrogen-responsive) lining both the oviducts and the uterus in female mice. During the secretory phase, VEGF expression was shown to have shifted to the underlying stroma composing the functional endometrium. In addition to examining the endometrium, neovascularization of ovarian follicles and the corpus luteum, as well as angiogenesis in embryonic implantation sites
15 have been analyzed. For these processes, VEGF was expressed in spatial and temporal proximity to forming vasculature (Shweiki *et al.*, 1993, *J. Clin. Invest.* 91, 2235-2243).

6) Kidney disease: Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD) is the most common life threatening hereditary disease in the USA. It affects about 1:400 to 1:1000 people and approximately 50% of people with ADPKD develop renal failure.
20 ADPKD accounts for about 5-10% of end-stage renal failure in the USA, requiring dialysis and renal transplantation. Angiogenesis is implicated in the progression of ADPKD for growth of cyst cells, as well as increased vascular permeability promoting fluid secretion into cysts. Proliferation of cystic epithelium is a feature of ADPKD because cyst cells in culture produce soluble vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF).
25 VEGFr1 has been detected in epithelial cells of cystic tubules but not in endothelial cells in the vasculature of cystic kidneys or normal kidneys. VEGFr2 expression is increased in endothelial cells of cyst vessels and in endothelial cells during renal ischemia-reperfusion.

The use of radiation treatments and chemotherapeutics, such as Gemcytabine and
30 cyclophosphamide, are non-limiting examples of chemotherapeutic agents that can be combined with or used in conjunction with the nucleic acid molecules (*e.g.* siNA molecules) of the instant invention. Those skilled in the art will recognize that other

anti-cancer compounds and therapies can similarly be readily combined with the nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention (*e.g.* siNA molecules) and are hence within the scope of the instant invention. Such compounds and therapies are well known in the art (see for example *Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology*, Volumes 1 and 2, eds 5 Devita, V.T., Hellman, S., and Rosenberg, S.A., J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, USA; incorporated herein by reference) and include, without limitation, folates, antifolates, pyrimidine analogs, fluoropyrimidines, purine analogs, adenosine analogs, topoisomerase I inhibitors, anthrapyrazoles, retinoids, antibiotics, anthacyclins, platinum 10 analogs, alkylating agents, nitrosoureas, plant derived compounds such as vinca alkaloids, epipodophyllotoxins, tyrosine kinase inhibitors, taxols, radiation therapy, surgery, nutritional supplements, gene therapy, radiotherapy, for example 3D-CRT, immunotoxin therapy, for example ricin, and monoclonal antibodies. Specific examples 15 of chemotherapeutic compounds that can be combined with or used in conjunction with the nucleic acid molecules of the invention include, but are not limited to, Paclitaxel; Docetaxel; Methotrexate; Doxorubicin; Edatrexate; Vinorelbine; Tomaxifen; Leucovorin; 5-fluoro uridine (5-FU); Imitotecan; Cisplatin; Carboplatin; Amsacrine; Cytarabine; Bleomycin; Mitomycin C; Dactinomycin; Mithramycin; Hexamethylmelamine; Dacarbazine; L-asperginate; Nitrogen mustard; Melphalan, Chlorambucil; Busulfan; Ifosfamide; 4-hydroperoxycyclophosphamide; Thiotepa; Irinotecan (CAMPTOSAR®, 20 CPT-11, Camptothecin-11, Campto) Tamoxifen; Herceptin; IMC C225; ABX-EGF; and combinations thereof. The above list of compounds are non-limiting examples of compounds and/or methods that can be combined with or used in conjunction with the nucleic acid molecules (*e.g.* siNA) of the instant invention. Those skilled in the art will recognize that other drug compounds and therapies can similarly be readily combined 25 with the nucleic acid molecules of the instant invention (*e.g.*, siNA molecules) are hence within the scope of the instant invention.

Example 12: Diagnostic uses

The siNA molecules of the invention can be used in a variety of diagnostic applications, such as in the identification of molecular targets (*e.g.*, RNA) in a variety of 30 applications, for example, in clinical, industrial, environmental, agricultural and/or research settings. Such diagnostic use of siNA molecules involves utilizing reconstituted RNAi systems, for example, using cellular lysates or partially purified cellular lysates.

siNA molecules of this invention can be used as diagnostic tools to examine genetic drift and mutations within diseased cells or to detect the presence of endogenous or exogenous, for example viral, RNA in a cell. The close relationship between siNA activity and the structure of the target RNA allows the detection of mutations in any 5 region of the molecule, which alters the base-pairing and three-dimensional structure of the target RNA. By using multiple siNA molecules described in this invention, one can map nucleotide changes, which are important to RNA structure and function *in vitro*, as well as in cells and tissues. Cleavage of target RNAs with siNA molecules can be used to inhibit gene expression and define the role of specified gene products in the 10 progression of disease or infection. In this manner, other genetic targets can be defined as important mediators of the disease. These experiments will lead to better treatment of the disease progression by affording the possibility of combination therapies (e.g., multiple siNA molecules targeted to different genes, siNA molecules coupled with known small molecule inhibitors, or intermittent treatment with combinations siNA 15 molecules and/or other chemical or biological molecules). Other *in vitro* uses of siNA molecules of this invention are well known in the art, and include detection of the presence of mRNAs associated with a disease, infection, or related condition. Such RNA is detected by determining the presence of a cleavage product after treatment with a siNA using standard methodologies, for example, fluorescence resonance emission 20 transfer (FRET).

In a specific example, siNA molecules that cleave only wild-type or mutant forms of the target RNA are used for the assay. The first siNA molecules (*i.e.*, those that cleave only wild-type forms of target RNA) are used to identify wild-type RNA present in the sample and the second siNA molecules (*i.e.*, those that cleave only mutant forms 25 of target RNA) are used to identify mutant RNA in the sample. As reaction controls, synthetic substrates of both wild-type and mutant RNA are cleaved by both siNA molecules to demonstrate the relative siNA efficiencies in the reactions and the absence of cleavage of the "non-targeted" RNA species. The cleavage products from the synthetic substrates also serve to generate size markers for the analysis of wild-type and 30 mutant RNAs in the sample population. Thus, each analysis requires two siNA molecules, two substrates and one unknown sample, which is combined into six reactions. The presence of cleavage products is determined using an RNase protection assay so that full-length and cleavage fragments of each RNA can be analyzed in one

lane of a polyacrylamide gel. It is not absolutely required to quantify the results to gain insight into the expression of mutant RNAs and putative risk of the desired phenotypic changes in target cells. The expression of mRNA whose protein product is implicated in the development of the phenotype (*i.e.*, disease related or infection related) is adequate to 5 establish risk. If probes of comparable specific activity are used for both transcripts, then a qualitative comparison of RNA levels is adequate and decreases the cost of the initial diagnosis. Higher mutant form to wild-type ratios are correlated with higher risk whether RNA levels are compared qualitatively or quantitatively.

10 All patents and publications mentioned in the specification are indicative of the levels of skill of those skilled in the art to which the invention pertains. All references cited in this disclosure are incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each reference had been incorporated by reference in its entirety individually.

15 One skilled in the art would readily appreciate that the present invention is well adapted to carry out the objects and obtain the ends and advantages mentioned, as well as those inherent therein. The methods and compositions described herein as presently representative of preferred embodiments are exemplary and are not intended as limitations on the scope of the invention. Changes therein and other uses will occur to those skilled in the art, which are encompassed within the spirit of the invention, are defined by the scope of the claims.

20 It will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art that varying substitutions and modifications can be made to the invention disclosed herein without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Thus, such additional embodiments are within the scope of the present invention and the following claims. The present invention teaches one skilled in the art to test various combinations and/or substitutions of chemical 25 modifications described herein toward generating nucleic acid constructs with improved activity for mediating RNAi activity. Such improved activity can comprise improved stability, improved bioavailability, and/or improved activation of cellular responses mediating RNAi. Therefore, the specific embodiments described herein are not limiting and one skilled in the art can readily appreciate that specific combinations of the 30 modifications described herein can be tested without undue experimentation toward identifying siNA molecules with improved RNAi activity.

The invention illustratively described herein suitably can be practiced in the absence of any element or elements, limitation or limitations that are not specifically disclosed herein. Thus, for example, in each instance herein any of the terms "comprising", "consisting essentially of", and "consisting of" may be replaced with either
5 of the other two terms. The terms and expressions which have been employed are used as terms of description and not of limitation, and there is no intention that in the use of such terms and expressions of excluding any equivalents of the features shown and described or portions thereof, but it is recognized that various modifications are possible within the scope of the invention claimed. Thus, it should be understood that although
10 the present invention has been specifically disclosed by preferred embodiments, optional features, modification and variation of the concepts herein disclosed may be resorted to by those skilled in the art, and that such modifications and variations are considered to be within the scope of this invention as defined by the description and the appended claims.

In addition, where features or aspects of the invention are described in terms of
15 Markush groups or other grouping of alternatives, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention is also thereby described in terms of any individual member or subgroup of members of the Markush group or other group.

Table I: VEGF and VEGFr Accession Numbers

5 NM_005429
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor C
(VEGFC), mRNA
gi|19924300|ref|NM_005429.2|[19924300]

10 NM_003376
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor
(VEGF), mRNA
gi|19923239|ref|NM_003376.2|[19923239]

15 AF095785
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
gene, promoter region and
partial cds
gi|4154290|gb|AF095785.1|[4154290]

20 NM_003377
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor B
(VEGFB), mRNA
gi|20070172|ref|NM_003377.2|[20070172]

25 AF486837
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor
isoform VEGF165 (VEGF) mRNA,
complete cds
gi|19909064|gb|AF486837.1|[19909064]

30 AF468110
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor B
isoform (VEGFB) gene, complete
cds, alternatively spliced
gi|18766397|gb|AF468110.1|[18766397]

35 AF437895
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
gene, partial cds
gi|16660685|gb|AF437895.1|AF437895[16660685]

40 AY047581

Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
mRNA, complete cds
gi|15422108|gb|AY047581.1|[15422108]

5 AF063657
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor
receptor (FLT1) mRNA, complete
cds
10 gi|3132830|gb|AF063657.1|AF063657[3132830]

AF092127
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
15 gene, partial sequence
gi|4139168|gb|AF092127.1|AF092127[4139168]

AF092126
20 Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
gene, 5' UTR
gi|4139167|gb|AF092126.1|AF092126[4139167]

AF092125
25 Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
gene, partial cds
gi|4139165|gb|AF092125.1|AF092125[4139165]

E15157
30 Human VEGF mRNA
gi|5709840|dbj|E15157.1||pat|JP|1998052285|2[5709840]

E15156
35 Human VEGF mRNA
gi|5709839|dbj|E15156.1||pat|JP|1998052285|1[5709839]

E14233
40 Human mRNA for vascular endothelial growth factor
(VEGF), complete cds
gi|5708916|dbj|E14233.1||pat|JP|1997286795|1[5708916]

45 AF024710
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)
mRNA, 3'UTR
50 gi|2565322|gb|AF024710.1|AF024710[2565322]

5 AJ010438
Homo sapiens mRNA for vascular endothelial growth factor, splicing variant
VEGF183
gi|3647280|emb|AJ010438.1|HSA010438 [3647280]

10 AF098331
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) gene, promoter, partial sequence
gi|4235431|gb|AF098331.1|AF098331 [4235431]

15 AF022375
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor mRNA, complete cds
gi|3719220|gb|AF022375.1|AF022375 [3719220]

20 AH006909
vascular endothelial growth factor {alternative splicing} [human, Genomic, 414 nt 5 segments]
gi|1680143|gb|AH006909.1||bbm|191843 [1680143]

25 U01134
Human soluble vascular endothelial cell growth factor receptor (sflt) mRNA, complete cds
gi|451321|gb|U01134.1|U01134 [451321]

30 E14000
Human mRNA for FLT
gi|3252767|dbj|E14000.1||pat|JP|1997255700|1 [3252767]

35 E13332
cDNA encoding vascular endodermal cell growth factor VEGF
gi|3252137|dbj|E13332.1||pat|JP|1997173075|1 [3252137]

40 E13256
Human mRNA for FLT, complete cds
gi|3252061|dbj|E13256.1||pat|JP|1997154588|1 [3252061]

AF063658
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor
receptor 2 (KDR) mRNA, complete
cds
gi|3132832|gb|AF063658.1|AF063658 [3132832]

AJ000185
Homo Sapiens mRNA for vascular endothelial growth
factor-D
gi|2879833|emb|AJ000185.1|HSAJ185 [2879833]

D89630
Homo sapiens mRNA for VEGF-D, complete cds
gi|2780339|dbj|D89630.1|[2780339]

AF035121
Homo sapiens KDR/flk-1 protein mRNA, complete cds
gi|2655411|gb|AF035121.1|AF035121 [2655411]

AF020393
Homo sapiens vascular endothelial growth factor C
gene, partial cds and 5'
upstream region
gi|2582366|gb|AF020393.1|AF020393 [2582366]

Y08736
H.sapiens vegf gene, 3'UTR
gi|1619596|emb|Y08736.1|HSVEGF3UT [1619596]

X62568
H.sapiens vegf gene for vascular endothelial growth
factor
gi|37658|emb|X62568.1|HSVEGF [37658]

X94216
H.sapiens mRNA for VEGF-C protein
gi|1177488|emb|X94216.1|HSVEGFC [1177488]

NM_002020
Homo sapiens fms-related tyrosine kinase 4 (FLT4),
mRNA
gi|4503752|ref|NM_002020.1|[4503752]

NM_002253
Homo sapiens kinase insert domain receptor (a type III
receptor tyrosine kinase)
5 (KDR), mRNA
gi|11321596|ref|NM_002253.1|[11321596]

Table II: VEGF siNA and Target Sequences

VEGF|NM_003376.3

Pos	Seq	Seq ID	UpPos	Upper seq	Seq ID	LPos	Lower seq	Seq ID
3	GCGGAGGCCUUGGGCAGCC	1	3	GCGGAGGCCUUGGGCAGCC	1	21	GGCUGCCCCAACGCCUCGGC	97
21	CGGUAGCUUGGGGCUJCGU	2	21	CGGGUAGCUUGGGGCUJCGU	2	39	ACGACUCUCCGAGCUACCG	98
39	UGGCCUGGGGGCUAGCAC	3	39	UGGCCUGGGGGCUAGCAC	3	57	GUGCUAGCCCCAGCGCCA	99
57	CCAGCGCUCUGUGGGAGG	4	57	CCAGCGCUCUGUGGGAGG	4	75	CCUCCGACAGAGGCCUGG	100
75	GCGCAGGGGUAGGUAGGAC	5	75	GCGCAGGGGUAGGUAGGAC	5	93	GUCCACCUAACGGCUGGCC	101
93	CGGUUCAGGGGACUCACCG	6	93	CGGUUCAGGGGACUCACCG	6	111	CGGUGAGUCCGUGACCGG	102
111	GGCCAGGGGGCUUGGUJCU	7	111	GGCCAGGGGGCUUGGUJCU	7	129	AGCACCGAGGCCUGGGCC	103
129	UGGAUUUUGAUUAUCAUJG	8	129	UGGAUUUUGAUUAUCAUJG	8	147	CAAUGAAUAUAAAUCCA	104
147	GAUCCGGGUUUUAUCCCUC	9	147	GAUCCGGGUUUUAUCCCUC	9	165	GAGGGAUAAAACCCGGAU	105
165	CUCUUUUUUCUAAAACAU	10	165	CUCUUUUUUCUAAAACAU	10	183	AUGUUUAGAAAAAGAAAG	106
183	UUUUUUUAAAACGUJAU	11	183	UUUUUUUAAAACGUJAU	11	201	AUACAGUUUUAAAAAAA	107
201	UUGUUUUUCGUUUUUUUU	12	201	UUGUUUUUCGUUUUUUUU	12	219	AAAUUAAAACGGAAACAA	108
219	UAUUUUUUCGUJCUAUJCC	13	219	UAUUUUUUCGUJCUAUJCC	13	237	GGAAUUGCAAGCAAAAU	109
237	CCACUUGAUAUCGGGCCGA	14	237	CCACUUGAUAUCGGGCCGA	14	255	UCGGCCCGAUUCAAGUGGG	110
255	ACGGCUUGGGGAGAUJGU	15	255	ACGGCUUGGGGAGAUJGU	15	273	AGCAAUUCUCCCAAGCCGU	111
273	UCUACUUCCCCCAAUACAU	16	273	UCUACUUCCCCCAAUACAU	16	291	AGUGAUUUUGGGAGUAGA	112
291	UGUGGAUUUUGGAAACCAG	17	291	UGUGGAUUUUGGAAACCAG	17	309	CUGGUUUCAAAUCACCA	113
309	GCAGAAAGAGGAAAGGGU	18	309	GCAGAAAGAGGAAAGGGU	18	327	ACCUUUUCUUCUUCUGC	114
327	UAGCAAGAGCUCCAGAGAG	19	327	UAGCAAGAGCUCCAGAGAG	19	345	CUCUCUGGAGCUUUGCUA	115
345	GAAGUCGAGGAAGAGAG	20	345	GAAGUCGAGGAAGAGAG	20	363	CUCUCUUCUCCUGACUUC	116
363	GACGGGGGUCAAGAGAGGCG	21	363	GACGGGGGUCAAGAGAGGCG	21	381	CGCUCUCUUCUACCCCCGUC	117
381	GCGGGGGGUUGCGAGGAGC	22	381	GCGGGGGGUUGCGAGGAGC	22	399	GCUGUCUGGACGCCGGC	118
399	CGAAAAGCGACAGGGCAA	23	399	CGAAAAGCGACAGGGCAA	23	417	UUUGCCCCUGUGGCUUUUG	119
417	AGUGAGUGACCUCUUJUG	24	417	AGUGAGUGACCUCUUJUG	24	435	CAAAGCAGGUACACUCACU	120
435	GGGGGUUGACCGGGAGGCG	25	435	GGGGGUUGACCGGGAGGCG	25	453	CGCUCUCGGGGGUACCCCC	121
453	GCGGCUGGAGGCCUCCCC	26	453	GCGGCUGGAGGCCUCCCC	26	471	GGGGAGGGCUACGCCGC	122
471	CUUGGGAUCCCCGACGUJGA	27	471	CUUGGGAUCCCCGACGUJGA	27	489	UCAGCUCUGGGGAUCCCAAG	123
489	ACCAAGUCGGGCUACGGAC	28	489	ACCAAGUCGGGCUACGGAC	28	507	GUCCGUCAAGCGGACUGGU	124
507	CAAGACAGACAGACACCGCC	29	507	CAAGACAGACAGACACCGCC	29	525	GGGGAGGGCUUGUGUCUG	125
525	CCCGAGCCCCAGCUACAC	30	525	CCCGAGCCCCAGCUACAC	30	543	GGGUAGCUGGGGGUGGGG	126
543	CCUCCUCCCCCGGGGCGG	31	543	CCUCCUCCCCCGGGGCGG	31	561	CGGCCGGGGGGAGGAGG	127

561	GCGGACAGUGGAGCAGGGCG	32	561	GCGGACAGUGGAGCAGGGCG	32	579	CGCCCGGUCCACUUGCCGC	128
579	GGCGAGCCGGCAGGGG	33	579	GGCGAGCCGGCAGGGG	33	597	CCCCUGCCCGGCCUCGGCC	129
597	GGCGAGCCGGCAGGGG	34	597	GGCGAGCCGGCAGGGG	34	615	UCCGGGCCGGCUCCGGGC	130
615	AGGCCGGGUUGGGGGUC	35	615	AGGCCGGGUUGGGGGUC	35	633	GACCCCUCACCCGGCCU	131
633	CGGGGCUCCGGGUUCGCA	36	633	CGGGGCUCCGGGUUCGCA	36	651	UGCGAAGCCGGAGCCCCG	132
651	ACUGAAACUUUUCGUCAA	37	651	ACUGAAACUUUUCGUCAA	37	669	UUGGACGAAAAGUUUCAGU	133
669	ACUUCUGGGCUGGUUCUGC	38	669	ACUUCUGGGCUGGUUCUGC	38	687	GCGAGAACAGCCAGAAAGU	134
687	CUUCGGAGGAGCCGUUGUC	39	687	CUUCGGAGGAGCCGUUGUC	39	705	GACCCAAGGUUCUCCUGGAAG	135
705	CCGGCGGGGGAAAGCCGAG	40	705	CCGGCGGGGGAAAGCCGAG	40	723	CUCGGGUUCCCCCCGGCC	136
723	GCGAGGGAGCCGGAGAGA	41	723	GCGAGGGAGCCGGAGAGA	41	741	UCUCGGGUUCGGCUCCGGC	137
741	AAGUGGUAGGCUCCCCGGG	42	741	AAGUGGUAGGCUCCCCGGG	42	759	CCGGCCCAGGUAGCACUU	138
759	GGAGGGAGCCGAGCCGGAG	43	759	GGAGGGAGCCGAGCCGGAG	43	777	CUCGGGUUCGGCUCCUCC	139
777	GGAGGGGGAGGAGGAAGAA	44	777	GGAGGGGGAGGAGGAAGAA	44	795	UUCUUCCUCUCCUCCCUCC	140
795	AGAGAAGGAAGGAGAGG	45	795	AGAGAAGGAAGGAGAGG	45	813	CCUCUCUCCUCCUCCUCCU	141
813	GGGGCCGAGUGGGGACUC	46	813	GGGGCCGAGUGGGGACUC	46	831	GAGUGGCCACUGGGCCCC	142
831	CGGGGCUCCGGAAGCCGGC	47	831	CGGGGCUCCGGAAGCCGGC	47	849	GCCCCGGCUCCGAGGCC	143
849	CUCAUUGGACGGGUUGAGGCG	48	849	CUCAUUGGACGGGUUGAGGCG	48	867	CGCCUACACCGGUCCAUAGAG	144
867	GGGGGUGUGCCAGACAGU	49	867	GGGGGUGUGCCAGACAGU	49	885	ACUGUCUGGGCACACCGGC	145
885	UGCUCCAGCCGGCGCU	50	885	UGCUCCAGCCGGCGCU	50	903	AGCGCGGGGGUUGGAGCA	146
903	UCCCCAGGCCUGGCCGG	51	903	UCCCCAGGCCUGGCCGG	51	921	CCGGGCCAGGGGUUGGGGA	147
921	GGCCUCGGGGGGAGGGA	52	921	GGCCUCGGGGGGAGGGA	52	939	UCCUCCCGGCCGGAGGCC	148
939	AAGAGUAGGUUCGGCGAGGC	53	939	AAGAGUAGGUUCGGCGAGGC	53	957	GCUUCGGGUAGGUACUCUU	149
957	CGCCGAGGGAGGGGGCCG	54	957	CGCCGAGGGAGGGGGCCG	54	975	CGGCCGCUCCUCUGGGCG	150
975	GCCCCACAGCCGAGCCGG	55	975	GCCCCACAGCCGAGCCGG	55	993	CGGGCUJGGGGUUGGGGC	151
993	GAGGGGAGCCGAGCCGC	56	993	GAGGGGAGCCGAGCCGC	56	1011	GGGGCUCCGUCCUCUC	152
1011	CGGGGGCCCCGGUCGGGCC	57	1011	CGGGGGCCCCGGUCGGGCC	57	1029	GGCCCCGACCCGGGGGGCC	153
1029	CUCCGAAACCAUGAACUUU	58	1029	CUCCGAAACCAUGAACUUU	58	1047	AAAGGUCAUGGUUCGGAG	154
1047	UCUGCUGGUUGGGUGCAU	59	1047	UCUGCUGGUUGGGUGCAU	59	1065	AUGGCCAACAGACAGCAGA	155
1065	UUGGAGCCUUGCCUUGCUG	60	1065	UUGGAGCCUUGCCUUGCUG	60	1083	CAGGAAAGGCAAGGUUCUCA	156
1083	GUUCUACCUCCACCAUGC	61	1083	GUUCUACCUCCACCAUGC	61	1101	GGCAUGGUUGGGAGUAGAGC	157
1101	CAAGUGGUCCAGGCUGCA	62	1101	CAAGUGGUCCAGGCUGCA	62	1119	UGCGAGCCUGGGGACACUUG	158
1119	ACCCAUGGCGAGAGGAGGA	63	1119	ACCCAUGGCGAGAGGAGGA	63	1137	UCCUCUUCUGCAUGGGU	159
1137	AGGGCAGAAUCACGAA	64	1137	AGGGCAGAAUCACGAA	64	1155	UUCGUGAUGAUUCACACU	160
1155	AGUGGUGAAGGUUCAGGAU	65	1155	AGUGGUGAAGGUUCAGGAU	65	1173	AUCCAUGAACUUACACACU	161
1173	UGUCUAUCAGGCAGCUAC	66	1173	UGUCUAUCAGGCAGCUAC	66	1191	GUAGGUUGGGCUGAUAGACA	162
1191	CUGCCAUCCAAUCGAGACC	67	1191	CUGCCAUCCAAUCGAGACC	67	1209	GGUCUCGAUJGGAUUGGCAG	163
1209	CCUGGGGGACAUUCCAG	68	1209	CCUGGGGGACAUUCCAG	68	1227	CUGGAAGAUGGUACCCAGG	164

1227	GGAGUACCCUJGAUGAGAUC	69	1227	GGAGUACCCUJGAUGAGAUC	69	1245	GAUCUCAUCAGGGGUACUCC	165
1245	CGAGUACAUUUCAAGCCA	70	1245	CGAGUACAUUUCAAGCCA	70	1263	UGGCUGUAAGAUGUACUCC	166
1263	AUCCUGUGGCCUUGAUG	71	1263	AUCCUGUGGCCUUGAUG	71	1281	CAUCAGGGCACACAGGAU	167
1281	GCGAUGGGGGCUCUGC	72	1281	GCGAUGGGGGCUCUGC	72	1299	GCAGCAGCCCCGCAUCGC	168
1299	CAUGACGGGCCUGGAG	73	1299	CAUGACGGGCCUGGAG	73	1317	CUCAGGGCCCUCGUCAUUG	169
1317	GUGUGUGCCACUGAGGAG	74	1317	GUGUGUGCCACUGAGGAG	74	1335	CUCUCAGUGGGCACACAC	170
1335	GUCCAACAUCCAAUGCAG	75	1335	GUCCAACAUCCAAUGCAG	75	1353	CUGCAUGGUGAUGUJGGAC	171
1353	GAUUAUGGGGAUCAACC	76	1353	GAUUAUGGGGAUCAACC	76	1371	AGGUUUGAUCCGGCAUAUC	172
1371	UCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	77	1371	UCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	77	1389	UAUGUGUGGGCCUJGGUGA	173
1389	AGGAGAGAUGAGCUUCCUA	78	1389	AGGAGAGAUGAGCUUCCUA	78	1407	UAGGAAGCUCAUCUCUCCU	174
1407	ACAGGACAACAAUUGAA	79	1407	ACAGGACAACAAUUGAA	79	1425	UUCACAUUUGUJGGUGUGU	175
1425	AUGCAGACCAAGAAAGAU	80	1425	AUGCAGACCAAGAAAGAU	80	1443	AUCUUUCUJGGUCUGCAU	176
1443	UAGAGGCAAGACAAGAAAAA	81	1443	UAGAGGCAAGACAAGAAAAA	81	1461	UUIUUUCUJGUUJGUUCUCA	177
1461	AAAUAUCAGUUCUGGAGAAAG	82	1461	AAAUAUCAGUUCUGGAGAAAG	82	1479	CUUUCUCUGGAACUGAUUU	178
1479	GGGAAAGGGCAAAACGA	83	1479	GGGAAAGGGCAAAACGA	83	1497	UCGUUUUUGCCCCUJUUCCCC	179
1497	AAAGCGCAAGAAAUCCCG	84	1497	AAAGCGCAAGAAAUCCCG	84	1515	CCGGGAUJUUUCUJGGCUUU	180
1515	GUAAUAGUCUGGUAGCUU	85	1515	GUAAUAGUCUGGUAGCUU	85	1533	AACGCUCCAGGACUUAUC	181
1533	UCCUGUGGGCUUGCUCA	86	1533	UCCUGUGGGCUUGCUCA	86	1551	UGAGCAAGGGCCACAGGGA	182
1551	AGAGGGAGAAAGCAUJUG	87	1551	AGAGGGAGAAAGCAUJUG	87	1569	CAA AUGCUUUCUCCGGCUCU	183
1569	GUUUGUACAAGAUCCGAG	88	1569	GUUUGUACAAGAUCCGAG	88	1587	CUGCGGAUCUUGUACAAAC	184
1587	GACCGUAAAUGUUCUGC	89	1587	GACCGUAAAUGUUCUGC	89	1605	GCAGGAACAUUUAACAGUC	185
1605	CAAAAACACAGACUCGGU	90	1605	CAAAAACACAGACUCGGU	90	1623	ACGGCGAGUCUGUJUUUUUG	186
1623	UUGCAAGGGAGGGAGCUU	91	1623	UUGCAAGGGAGGGAGCUU	91	1641	AAGCUGCCUCGGCUJUGCAA	187
1641	UGAGUAAAAGGAACGUACU	92	1641	UGAGUAAAAGGAACGUACU	92	1659	AGUACGUJGUUUAACUCA	188
1659	UUGCAGAUGUGACAAGCCG	93	1659	UUGCAGAUGUGACAAGCCG	93	1677	CGGCUGUCACAUUCUGCAA	189
1677	GAGGGGGUGAGCCGGCAG	94	1677	GAGGGGGUGAGCCGGCAG	94	1695	CUGCCGGCUACCCGCCUC	190
1695	GGAGGAAGGAGCCUCCUC	95	1695	GGAGGAAGGAGCCUCCUC	95	1713	GAGGGAGGGCUCCUCCUC	191
1703	GAGCCUCCUCAGGGUUUC	96	1703	GAGCCUCCUCAGGGUUUC	96	1721	AAACCCUGAGGGAGGCUC	192

Table III: VEGF synthetic siNA and Target Sequences

Target Pos	Target	SeqID	Compo und #	Aliases	Sequence	SeqID
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193	32166	VEGF:331U21 siNA sense	AAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUUTT	233
414	CAAUGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194	32167	VEGF:416U21 siNA sense	AAGUGAGGACCUUUUTT	234
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195	32168	VEGF:1153U21 siNA sense	GAAGUGGGAGGUCAUGGTT	235
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196	32169	VEGF:1336U21 siNA sense	UCCAACAUCAUCACCAUGGAGATT	236
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193	32170	VEGF:349L21 siNA (331C) antisense	ACUUUCUCUGGAGCUCUUTT	237
414	CAAUGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194	32171	VEGF:434L21 siNA (416C) antisense	AAAAGCAGGACUCACUCAUUTT	238
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195	32172	VEGF:1171L21 siNA (1153C) antisense	CCAUGAACUUCACCAUCUUTT	239
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196	32173	VEGF:1354L21 siNA (1336C) antisense	UCUGCAUGGUGAUGUUGGATT	240
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:331U21 siNA stab04 sense	B AAGAGCUccAGAGGAAGUUTT B	241
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:416U21 siNA stab04 sense	B AAUGUGAGUCAUCUuUTT B	242
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1153U21 siNA stab04 sense	B GAAGUGGGAGGUcaUGGTT B	243
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196		VEGF:1336U21 siNA stab04 sense	B UccAAACAUAccAUGcAGATT B	244
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:349L21 siNA (331C) stab05 antisense	AcuucucucuGGAGCucuUTsT	245
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:434L21 siNA (416C) stab05 antisense	AAAAGCAGGGuAcucAcuUTsT	246
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1171L21 siNA (1153C) stab05 antisense	ccAuGAACuuAccAcuUTsT	247
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196		VEGF:1354L21 siNA (1336C) stab05 antisense	ucuGcAuGGuGAuGuGGATsT	248
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:331U21 siNA stab07 sense	B AAGAGCUccAGAGGAAGUUTT B	249
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:416U21 siNA stab07 sense	B AAUGUGAGUCAUCUuUTT B	250
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1153U21 siNA stab07 sense	B GAAGUGGGAGGUcaUGGTT B	251
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196		VEGF:1336U21 siNA stab07 sense	B UccAAACAUAccAUGcAGATT B	252
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:349L21 siNA (331C) stab11 antisense	AcuucucucuGGAGCucuUTsT	253
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:434L21 siNA (416C) stab11 antisense	AAAAGCAGGGuAcucAcuUTsT	254
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1171L21 siNA (1153C) stab11 antisense	ccAuGAACuuAccAcuUTsT	255
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196		VEGF:1354L21 siNA (1336C) stab11 antisense	ucuGcAuGGuGAuGuGGATsT	256
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:331U21 siNA stab08 sense	AGAGGCUccAGAGGAAGUUTsT	257
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:416U21 siNA stab08 sense	AGuGAGuGAccuGcuuUTsT	258
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1153U21 siNA stab08 sense	GAAGUGGGAGGUcaUGGTTsT	259
1334	AGUCCAAUCAUCACCAUGGAGAU	196		VEGF:1336U21 siNA stab08 sense	uccAAACAUAccAUGcAGATsT	260
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGGAAGUCCG	193		VEGF:349L21 siNA (331C) stab08 antisense	AcuucucucuGGAGCucuUTsT	261
414	CAAAGUGAGGACCUUUUGG	194		VEGF:434L21 siNA (416C) stab08 antisense	AAAAGCAGGGuAcucAcuUTsT	262
1151	ACGAAGGGAGGUCAUGGAU	195		VEGF:1171L21 siNA (1153C) stab08	ccAuGAACuuAccAcuUTsT	263

			antisense	
1334	AGUCCAACAUCCCCAUGCAGAUU	196	VEGF:1354L21 siNA (1336C) stab08 antisense	uuuGcAuGGGUAGuGuGGATst 264
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGAAUCG	193	VEGF:331U21 siNA stab09 sense	B AAGAGGCCUCCAGAGGAAGUTT B 265
414	CAAAGUGAGUGACCUGCUUUUGG	194	VEGF:416U21 siNA stab09 sense	B AAGUGAGUGACCUGCUUUUTT B 266
1151	ACGAAGUGGGUGAAGGUCAUGGAAU	195	VEGF:1153U21 siNA stab09 sense	B GAAGUGGGUGAAGGUCAUGGTT B 267
1334	AGUCCAACAUCCCCAUGCAGAUU	196	VEGF:1336U21 siNA stab09 sense	B UCCAACAUCCCCAUGCAGATT B 268
329	GCAAGAGCUCCAGAGAAUCG	193	VEGF:349L21 siNA (331C) stab10 antisense	ACUUUCUCUCUGGAGGCUCUUTST 269
414	CAAAGUGAGUGACCUGCUUUUGG	194	VEGF:434L21 siNA (416C) stab10 antisense	AAAAGCAGGUACUCACUUTST 270
1151	ACGAAGUGGGUGAAGGUCAUGGAAU	195	VEGF:1171L21 siNA (1153C) stab10 antisense	CCAUAAACUUUACCCACUUCTst 271
1334	AGUCCAACAUCCCCAUGCAGAUU	196	VEGF:1354L21 siNA (1336C) stab10 antisense	UCUGCAUGGUGAUGGUUGGATst 272
1207	AGACCCUGUGGGACAUCCCCAG	197	VEGF:1207U21 siNA sense	ACCCUGGGUGGACAUCCCCCT 273
1214	GGGGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCC	198	VEGF:1214U21 siNA sense	UGGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCT 274
1215	GUGGACAUCUCCCCGGAGUACCC	199	VEGF:1215U21 siNA sense	GGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCT 275
1217	GGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCCUG	200	VEGF:1217U21 siNA sense	ACAUCUCCCCGGAGUACCCCT 276
1358	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	VEGF:1358U21 siNA sense	UGCGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAT 277
1419	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAA	202	VEGF:1419U21 siNA sense	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGTT 278
1420	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	VEGF:1420U21 siNA sense	UGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGTT 279
1421	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAG	204	VEGF:1421U21 siNA sense	UGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGTT 280
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAGAU	205	VEGF:1423U21 siNA sense	GAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAAGTT 281
1587	CAGACGUGAAAUGGUCCUGCAA	206	VEGF:1587U21 siNA sense	GAACGUGAAAUGGUCCUGCTT 282
1591	CGUGAAAUGGUCCUGCAAAAC	207	VEGF:1591U21 siNA sense	UGUAAAUGGUCCUGCAAAATT 283
1592	GUUGAAAUGGUCCUGAAAAACCA	208	VEGF:1592U21 siNA sense	GUAAAUGGUCCUGAAAAATT 284
1593	UGAAAUGGUCCUGAAAAACAC	209	VEGF:1593U21 siNA sense	UAAAUGGUCCUGCAAAACTT 285
1594	GUAAAUGGUCCUGAAAAACACA	210	VEGF:1594U21 siNA sense	AAAUGGUCCUGCAAAACATT 286
1604	CUGCAAAACACAGACUCCGGUU	211	VEGF:1604U21 siNA sense	GCAAAACACAGACUCCGGTT 287
1637	GCAGCUUAGGUAAAAGGAACGUA	212	VEGF:1637U21 siNA sense	AGCUUAGGUAAAAGGAACGTT 288
1652	CGAACGUACUUGCAGAUGUGACA	213	VEGF:1652U21 siNA sense	ACGUACUUGCAGAUGUGATT 289
1656	CGUACUUGCAGAUGUGACAAGCC	214	VEGF:1656U21 siNA sense	UACUUGCAGAUGUGACAAGTT 290
1225	AGACCCUGUGGGACAUCCCCAG	197	VEGF:1225L21 siNA (1207C) antisense	GGAAAGAUGGUCCACGGGUTT 291
1232	GGGGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCC	198	VEGF:1232L21 siNA (1214C) antisense	UACUCCUGGGAAAGAUGUCCATT 292
1233	GUGGACAUCUCCCCGGAGUACCC	199	VEGF:1233L21 siNA (1215C) antisense	GUACUCCUGGGAAAGAUGUCCATT 293
1235	GGACAUCCCCGGAGUACCCUG	200	VEGF:1235L21 siNA (1217C) antisense	GGGUACUCCUGGGAAAGAUGUCCATT 294
1376	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	VEGF:1376L21 siNA (1358C) antisense	UGGUGGGGUUGAUCCGGCATT 295
1437	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAA	202	VEGF:1437L21 siNA (1419C) antisense	CUUUGGUCCUGCAUUCACAUTT 296
1438	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAA	203	VEGF:1438L21 siNA (1420C) antisense	UCUUUGGUCCUGCAUUCACATT 297

1439	AUGUGAAUUGCAGACCAAAAGAACG	204	32549	VEGF:1439U21 sINA (1421C) antisense	UCUUUUGGUCUGCAUUCACIT	298
1441	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAU	205	32550	VEGF:1441U21 sINA (1423C) antisense	CUUUCUJUGGUCUGCAUUCTT	299
1605	CAGACGUGAAAUGUCCUGCAA	206	32551	VEGF:1605U21 sINA (1587C) antisense	GCAGGAACAUUACACGUCTT	300
1609	CGUGAAAUGUCCUGCAAAAC	207	32552	VEGF:1609U21 sINA (1591C) antisense	UUUJUGCAGGAACAUUACATT	301
1610	GUUGAAAUGUCCUGCAAAACA	208	32553	VEGF:1610U21 sINA (1592C) antisense	UUUJUGCAGGAACAUUACTT	302
1611	UGUAAAUGUCCUGCAAAACAC	209	32554	VEGF:1611U21 sINA (1593C) antisense	GUUUUGCAGGAACAUUATT	303
1612	GUAAAUGUCCUGCAAAACACA	210	32555	VEGF:1612U21 sINA (1594C) antisense	GUUUUUGCAGGAACAUUUTT	304
1622	CUGGAAAAACACAGACUJCGGUU	211	32556	VEGF:1622U21 sINA (1604C) antisense	CGCGAGCUGUGGUUUUGCTT	305
1655	CGAGCUUUGAGUAAAACGAACGUA	212	32557	VEGF:1655U21 sINA (1637C) antisense	CGUUCGUUUAACUCAAGCUTT	306
1670	CGAACGUACUJUGCAGUGUGACA	213	32558	VEGF:1670U21 sINA (1652C) antisense	UCACAUUCUGCAAGUACGUUTT	307
1674	CGUACUJUGCAGUGJGACAAGCC	214	32559	VEGF:1674U21 sINA (1656C) antisense	CUJUGUCACAUUCUGCAAGUATT	308
1206	GAGACCUGGGGACAUUCCA	215	32560	VEGF:1206U21 sINA sense	GACCCUGGGGACAUUUCUTT	309
1208	GACCCUGGGGACAUUCCAGG	216	32561	VEGF:1208U21 sINA sense	CCUCCUGGGACAUUCCATT	310
1551	UCAGAGCGGAGAAAAGCAUJGUU	217	32562	VEGF:1551U21 sINA sense	AGAGCGGGAGAAAAGCAUJUGTT	311
1582	AUCCCGAGCAGGUGUAAAUGUCCC	218	32563	VEGF:1582U21 sINA sense	CGCGAGCAGGUGUAAAUGUUTT	312
1584	CGCGAGACGGGUGUAAAUGUCCUG	219	32564	VEGF:1584U21 sINA sense	CGAGACGUGGUAAAUGUUCCTT	313
1585	CGCAGACGUGUAAAUGUCCUGC	220	32565	VEGF:1585U21 sINA sense	CAGACGUGUAAAUGUUCUTT	314
1589	GACCGUGUAAAUGUCCUGCAAA	221	32566	VEGF:1589U21 sINA sense	CGUGUAAAUGUCCUGCAATT	315
1595	UAAAUGUUCUGCAAAACACAG	222	32567	VEGF:1595U21 sINA sense	AUGUUCUGCAAAACACATT	316
1596	AAAUGUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32568	VEGF:1596U21 sINA sense	AUGUUCUGCAAAACACATT	317
1602	UCCUGCAAAACACAGACUGCGG	224	32569	VEGF:1602U21 sINA sense	CGUGAAAAACACAGACUGCTT	318
1603	CCUGCAAAACACAGACUGCGU	225	32570	VEGF:1603U21 sINA sense	UGCAAAAAACACAGACUGCTT	319
1630	AGGGGAGGGAGCUUGAGUAAAAC	226	32571	VEGF:1630U21 sINA sense	GGGAGGGAGCUUGAGUAAAATT	320
1633	CGAGGAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAA	227	32572	VEGF:1633U21 sINA sense	AGGCAGCJUJGAGUJAAACGTT	321
1634	GAGGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAA	228	32573	VEGF:1634U21 sINA sense	GGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGATT	322
1635	AGGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAA	229	32574	VEGF:1635U21 sINA sense	GCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAA	323
1636	GGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAA	230	32575	VEGF:1636U21 sINA sense	CAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAACTT	324
1648	UAAACGAAACGUACUUGCAGAUGU	231	32576	VEGF:1648U21 sINA sense	AACGAACGUACUUGCAGAUGTT	325
1649	AAACGAAACGUACUUGCAGAUGUG	232	32577	VEGF:1649U21 sINA sense	ACGAACGUACUUGCAGAUGTT	326
1224	GAGACCCUGGGGACAUUCCCA	215	32578	VEGF:1224U21 sINA (1206C) antisense	GAAGAUGUCCACCGGGUCTT	327
1226	GACCCUGGGGACAUUCCAGG	216	32579	VEGF:1226U21 sINA (1208C) antisense	UGGAAGAUGUCCACCGGGTT	328
1569	UCAGAGCGGGAGAAAAGCAUJGUU	217	32580	VEGF:1569U21 sINA (1551C) antisense	CAAAUGCUUUCUGCUCUTT	329
1600	AUCCGCAGACGGGUAAAUGUCC	218	32581	VEGF:1600U21 sINA (1582C) antisense	AACAUUUACACGUCUGGGTT	330
1602	CGGCAGACGGGUAAAUGUCCUG	219	32582	VEGF:1602U21 sINA (1584C) antisense	GGAACAUUUACACGUCUGGCTT	331
1603	CGCAGACGUGUAAAUGUCCUGCAAA	220	32583	VEGF:1603U21 sINA (1585C) antisense	AGGAACAUUUACACGUCUGTT	332
1607	GACGUGUAAAUGUCCUGCAAA	221	32584	VEGF:1607U21 sINA (1589C) antisense	UJGCAGGAACAUUUACACGTT	333
1613	UAAUGUUCUGCAGAAACACAG	222	32585	VEGF:1613U21 sINA (1595C) antisense	GUUUUJUGCAGGAACAUUTT	334

1614	AAAUGUUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32586	VEGF:1614L21 siNA (1596C) antisense	UGUGUUUUUGCAGGAACAUU	335
1620	UCCUGCAAAACACAGACUCGGG	224	32587	VEGF:1620L21 siNA (1602C) antisense	CGAGUCUGGUUUUUGCAGTT	336
1621	CCUGCAAAACACAGACUCGGU	225	32588	VEGF:1621L21 siNA (1603C) antisense	GCGAGUCUGGUUUUUGCATT	337
1648	AGGCAGGGCAGCUUAGGUAAAAC	226	32589	VEGF:1648L21 siNA (1630C) antisense	UUAACUCAAGCUCGCCUCGCTT	338
1651	CGAGGCAGCUUGAGGUAAAACGAA	227	32590	VEGF:1651L21 siNA (1633C) antisense	CGUUUAAACUCAAGCUCGCCUTT	339
1652	GAGGCAGCUUGAGGUAAAACGAAAC	228	32591	VEGF:1652L21 siNA (1634C) antisense	UCGUUUAACUCAAGCUCGCCTT	340
1653	AGGCAGCUUGAGGUAAAACGAAACG	229	32592	VEGF:1653L21 siNA (1635C) antisense	UUCGUUUAACUCAAGCUCGCTT	341
1654	GGCAGCUUGAGGUAAAACGAAACGU	230	32593	VEGF:1654L21 siNA (1636C) antisense	GUUCGUUUAACUCAAGCUCGTT	342
1666	AAAACGAACGUACUUGAGAUGU	231	32594	VEGF:1666L21 siNA (1648C) antisense	AUCUGCAAGGUACGUUCGUUTT	343
1667	AAACGAACGUACUUGAGAUGU	232	32595	VEGF:1667L21 siNA (1649C) antisense	CAUCUGCAAGGUACGUUCGUUTT	344
1358	UAUGGGGAUCAACCUACCAAAG	201	32968	VEGF:1358U21 siNA stab07 sense	BuGGGGAUAAAACCUACATTB	345
1419	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAA	202	32969	VEGF:1419U21 siNA stab07 sense	BAuGuGAAuGAGACAAAGTTB	346
1421	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAAG	204	32970	VEGF:1421U21 siNA stab07 sense	BGuGAAuGcAGACCAAAAGAAATTB	347
1596	AAAUGUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32971	VEGF:1596U21 siNA stab07 sense	BAuGuuccUGcAAAAAACACATTB	348
1636	GGCAGCUUGAGGUAAAACGAAACGU	230	32972	VEGF:1636U21 siNA stab07 sense	BcAGcuuGAGGuAAAACGAACTTB	349
1376	UAUGGGGAUCAAACCUACCAAAG	201	32973	VEGF:1376L21 siNA (1358C) stab08 antisense	uGGuGAGGUuGGuuGGuuGGCATST	350
1437	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAA	202	32974	VEGF:1437L21 siNA (1419C) stab08 antisense	cuuuGGGuuGcAuucAcAUtST	351
1439	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAAG	204	32975	VEGF:1439L21 siNA (1421C) stab08 antisense	uucuuuGGGuuGcAuucAcTST	352
1614	AAAUGUUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32976	VEGF:1614L21 siNA (1596C) stab08 antisense	uGuGuuuuGcAGGAACAUtST	353
1654	GGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAAACGU	230	32977	VEGF:1654L21 siNA (1636C) stab08 antisense	GuicGuuAACuCAAGCUCGTST	354
1358	UAUGGGGAUCAACCUACCAAAG	201	32978	VEGF:1358U21 siNA stab09 sense	BUGCGGAUCUAAAACCUCACCATB	355
1419	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAA	202	32979	VEGF:1419U21 siNA stab09 sense	BAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGTTB	356
1421	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAAG	204	32980	VEGF:1421U21 siNA stab09 sense	BGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAATTB	357
1596	AAAUGUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32981	VEGF:1596U21 siNA stab09 sense	BAUGUUUCUGCAAAACACATTB	358
1636	GGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAAACGU	230	32982	VEGF:1636U21 siNA stab09 sense	BCAGCUUAGGUAAAACGAACTTB	359
1376	UAUGGGGAUCAAACCUACCAAAG	201	32983	VEGF:1376L21 siNA (1358C) stab10 antisense	UGGUGAGGUUUGAUUCGGCATST	360
1437	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAA	202	32984	VEGF:1437L21 siNA (1419C) stab10 antisense	CuUUGGUUCUGCAUUCACAUTST	361
1439	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAAAGAAAG	204	32985	VEGF:1439L21 siNA (1421C) stab10 antisense	UUCUUUGGUUCUGCAUUCACTST	362
1614	AAAUGUUUCUGCAAAACACAGA	223	32986	VEGF:1614L21 siNA (1596C) stab10 antisense	UGUGUUUUUGCAGGAACAUTST	363
1654	GGCAGCUUGAGUAAAACGAAACGU	230	32987	VEGF:1654L21 siNA (1636C) stab10 antisense	GUUCGUUUAACUCAAGCUCGTST	364

1358	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	32998	VEGF:1358U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B AccAcuccAAA <u>A<u>GU</u></u> AGG <u>G<u>C</u></u> GuTT B	365	
1419	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAA	202	32999	VEGF:1419U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B GAA <u>AGCAG<u>AC</u></u> GuAA <u>GU</u> GuATT B	366	
1421	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAAG	204	33000	VEGF:1421U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B AAGAAA <u>CC<u>AG</u></u> AcGuAA <u>GU</u> GuGTT B	367	
1596	AAAUGUUCUGCAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> AGA	223	33001	VEGF:1596U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B ACACAAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> Gu <u>CC</u> uGuATT B	368	
1636	GGCAGCUU <u>G<u>AG</u></u> UAA <u>AC</u> GAACGU	230	33002	VEGF:1636U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B cAAG <u>c<u>AA</u><u>uu</u></u> Gu <u>G<u>u</u></u> u <u>G<u>a</u></u> GuCC TT B	369	
1376	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	33003	antisense	VEGF:1376L21 siNA (1358C) inv stab08	AcG <u>cc</u> uAG <u>Gu</u> u <u>GG<u>AG</u></u> Gu <u>G<u>u</u></u> TsT	370
1437	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAA	202	33004	antisense	VEGF:1437L21 siNA (1419C) inv stab08	u <u>A<u>c<u>cc</u>u</u>AcGu<u>Gu</u>u<u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u></u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u>u<u>TsT</u></u>	371
1439	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAAG	204	33005	antisense	VEGF:1439L21 siNA (1421C) inv stab08	c <u>A<u>cc</u>u</u> AcGu <u>Gu</u> u <u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u></u> u <u>G<u>u</u></u> u <u>TsT</u>	372
1614	AAAUGUUCUGCAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> AGA	223	33006	antisense	VEGF:1614L21 siNA (1596C) inv stab08	u <u>A<u>c<u>cc</u>g<u>ac</u></u>Gu<u>uu</u>u<u>Gu<u>Gu</u></u>u<u>TsT</u></u>	373
1654	GGCAGCUU <u>G<u>AG</u></u> UAA <u>AC</u> GAACGU	230	33007	antisense	VEGF:1654L21 siNA (1636C) inv stab08	Gu <u>c<u>cc</u>g<u>aa</u><u>uu</u></u> Gu <u>Gu</u> u <u>G<u>GT</u></u> TsT	374
1358	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	33008	VEGF:1358U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B ACCACU <u>CA<u>AA</u><u>AC</u></u> Gu <u>GG<u>CC</u></u> GuTT B	375	
1419	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAA	202	33009	VEGF:1419U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B GAA <u>AC<u>CC</u><u>AG</u></u> Gu <u>AA<u>GU</u></u> GuATT B	376	
1421	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAAG	204	33010	VEGF:1421U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B AAGAAA <u>CC<u>AG</u></u> Ac <u>CC</u> Gu <u>AG<u>GU</u></u> TT B	377	
1596	AAAUGUUCUGCAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> AGA	223	33011	VEGF:1596U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B ACACAAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> Gu <u>CC</u> uGuATT B	378	
1636	GGCAGCUU <u>G<u>AG</u></u> UAA <u>AC</u> GAACGU	230	33012	VEGF:1636U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B CAAG <u>CC</u> AA <u>UU</u> u <u>U<u>G<u>u</u></u></u> Gu <u>CG<u>AC</u></u> TT B	379	
1376	UAUGGGGAUCAAAACCUCACCAAG	201	33013	antisense	VEGF:1376L21 siNA (1358C) inv stab10	ACGCCuAG <u>uu</u> u <u>GG<u>AG</u></u> u <u>GG<u>GT</u></u> TsT	380
1437	AAAUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAA	202	33014	antisense	VEGF:1437L21 siNA (1419C) inv stab10	u <u>A<u>c<u>cc</u>u</u>AcGu<u>Gu</u>u<u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u></u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u>u<u>TsT</u></u>	381
1439	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAAG	204	33015	antisense	VEGF:1439L21 siNA (1421C) inv stab10	CAC <u>U<u>A<u>c<u>cc</u>u</u></u>Gu<u>GG<u>uu</u></u>u<u>U<u>U</u></u>TsT</u>	382
1614	AAAUGUUCUGCAA <u>AA<u>AC</u></u> AGA	223	33016	antisense	VEGF:1614L21 siNA (1596C) inv stab10	u <u>A<u>c<u>cc</u>gg<u>ac</u></u>Gu<u>uu</u>u<u>U<u>U</u></u>u<u>G<u>u</u></u>u<u>TsT</u></u>	383
1654	GGCAGCUU <u>G<u>AG</u></u> UAA <u>AC</u> GAACGU	230	33017	antisense	VEGF:1654L21 siNA (1636C) inv stab10	Gu <u>c<u>cc</u>g<u>aa</u><u>uu</u></u> Gu <u>Gu</u> u <u>U<u>U</u></u> u <u>G<u>u</u></u> u <u>TsT</u>	384
349	AACUGAGUU <u>AA<u>AG</u></u> GCACCCAG	409	33580	FLT1:367L21 siNA (349C) stab08 + 5' aminoL antisense	L _GG <u>Gu</u> u <u>uu</u> u <u>AA<u>Ac</u></u> u <u>AG</u> TsT	411	
1214	GGUGGACAU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AGGUACC	198	33965	VEGF:1214U21 siNA stab09 sense	B UGGACAU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AG <u>GU</u> u <u>AT</u> T B	412	
1215	GU <u>GG<u>AC</u></u> AU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AG <u>GU</u> ACCC	199	33966	VEGF:1215U21 siNA stab09 sense	B GGACAU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AG <u>GU</u> u <u>AC</u> TT B	413	
1420	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAA	203	33968	VEGF:1420U21 siNA stab09 sense	B UGUGAA <u>U<u>GG</u></u> u <u>AC</u> AA <u>AG</u> TT B	414	
1423	GU <u>GA<u>UG</u></u> CA <u>AC</u> AA <u>AG</u> AA <u>AG</u> AU	205	33970	VEGF:1423U21 siNA stab09 sense	B GAA <u>UG</u> CA <u>AC</u> AA <u>AG</u> TT B	415	
1214	GU <u>GG<u>AC</u></u> AU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AG <u>GU</u> ACCC	198	33971	VEGF:1232L21 siNA (1214C) stab10 antisense	UACUCC <u>U<u>GG</u></u> AA <u>AG</u> u <u>GU</u> CCATsT	416	
1215	GU <u>GG<u>AC</u></u> AU <u>U<u>CC</u></u> AG <u>GU</u> ACCC	199	33972	VEGF:1233L21 siNA (1215C) stab10 antisense	GUACUCC <u>U<u>GG</u></u> AA <u>AG</u> u <u>GU</u> CCTsT	417	
1420	AUGUGAAUGCAGACCCAAAGAAA	203	33974	VEGF:1438L21 siNA (1420C) stab10	UCUU <u>GG<u>GU</u></u> u <u>GG<u>CA</u></u> u <u>AC</u> ATsT	418	

			antisense		
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	33976	VEGF:1441L21 siNA (1423C) stab10 antisense	CUUUCUUUGGUCUGCAUUCTST 419
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	33977	VEGF:1214U21 siNA stab07 sense	B ₁ GGAcAucuuccAGGA <u>GuATT</u> B 420
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	199	33978	VEGF:1215U21 siNA stab07 sense	B ₂ GGAcAucuuccAGGA <u>GuACTT</u> B 421
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	33980	VEGF:1420U21 siNA stab07 sense	B ₁ uGuGAAuGGAG <u>CCAAAGATT</u> B 422
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	33982	VEGF:1423U21 siNA stab07 sense	B ₂ GAAuGcA <u>GAccAAAGAAAGTT</u> B 423
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	33983	VEGF:1232L21 siNA (1214C) stab08 antisense	u <u>A</u> cu <u>ccuGGAAAGAGuGu<u>c</u>ATst 424</u>
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACCC	199	33984	VEGF:1233L21 siNA (1215C) stab08 antisense	Gu <u>A</u> cu <u>ccuGGAAAGAGuGu<u>c</u>CTst 425</u>
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	33986	VEGF:1438L21 siNA (1420C) stab08 antisense	ucuuu <u>G</u> Gu <u>c</u> Gu <u>c</u> A <u>u</u> u <u>c</u> ATst 426
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	33988	VEGF:1441L21 siNA (1423C) stab08 antisense	cuuuuu <u>G</u> Gu <u>c</u> Gu <u>c</u> A <u>u</u> u <u>c</u> Tst 427
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	33989	VEGF:1214U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B AUGAGGACCUU <u>J</u> U <u>C</u> A <u>CGG</u> UTT B 428
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACCC	199	33990	VEGF:1215U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B CAUGAGGACCUU <u>C</u> U <u>A</u> C <u>AGG</u> TT B 429
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	33992	VEGF:1420U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B AGAAAC <u>CCAGACGU</u> AGGUTT B 430
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	33994	VEGF:1423U21 siNA inv stab09 sense	B GAA <u>AGAAACCAGACGU</u> AGTT B 431
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	33995	VEGF:1232L21 siNA (1214C) inv stab10 antisense	ACCU <u>UAGGA<u>GGGU</u>CCU<u>CA</u>UT</u> T 432
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACCC	199	33996	VEGF:1233L21 siNA (1215C) inv stab10 antisense	CC <u>J</u> U <u>UAGGA<u>GGGU</u>CCU<u>CA</u>UGT</u> ST 433
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	33998	VEGF:1438L21 siNA (1420C) inv stab10 antisense	ACACUU <u>UCCUGGU</u> UUCUTST 434
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	34000	VEGF:1441L21 siNA (1423C) inv stab10 antisense	CUUAC <u>UCCUGGU</u> UUCUUCU <u>U</u> CTST 435
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	34001	VEGF:1214U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B AUGAGGAC <u>CCU</u> U <u>U</u> AC <u>GG</u> UTT B 436
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACCC	199	34002	VEGF:1215U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B <u>CA</u> u <u>GAGGACCU</u> U <u>U</u> AC <u>GG</u> TT B 437
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	34004	VEGF:1420U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B AGAA <u>ACCA<u>GC</u>GU</u> AGGu <u>GU</u> UTT B 438
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	34006	VEGF:1423U21 siNA inv stab07 sense	B GAA <u>AGAA<u>ACCA<u>GA</u>GU</u>AA<u>AG</u>TT B 439</u>
1214	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACC	198	34007	VEGF:1232L21 siNA (1214C) inv stab08 antisense	Acc <u>GuAGAA<u>GG</u>Gu<u>ccu</u>u<u>A</u>u<u>T</u>ST 440</u>
1215	GGGGACAUCCUCCAGGAGUACCC	199	34008	VEGF:1233L21 siNA (1215C) inv stab08 antisense	cc <u>GuAGAA<u>AGG</u>Gu<u>ccu</u>u<u>A</u>u<u>G</u>T</u> ST 441
1420	A AUGUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAA	203	34010	VEGF:1438L21 siNA (1420C) inv stab08 antisense	Ac <u>A</u> cu <u>u</u> u <u>Ac</u> Gu <u>c</u> Gu <u>uu</u> u <u>u</u> u <u>T</u> ST 442
1423	GUGAAUGCAGACCAAGAAAAGAU	205	34012	VEGF:1441L21 siNA (1423C) inv stab08 antisense	cu <u>u</u> u <u>Ac</u> Gu <u>c</u> Gu <u>uu</u> u <u>u</u> u <u>T</u> ST 443
1366	AAACCU <u>UCCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU</u>	410	34062	VEGF:1366U21 siNA stab00 (hVEGF5) sense	ACCU <u>UCCACCAAGGCCAGC</u> ACTT 444
1366	AAACCU <u>UCCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU</u>	410	34064	VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) stab00	GU <u>GGCUGGCCU</u> U <u>GGG</u> U <u>AGG</u> UTT 445

			(hVEGF5) antisense	
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	340666 VEGF:1366U21 siNA stab07 (hVEGF5) sense VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) stab08	B AccuAccAAGGccAGCcACTT B GuGcuGGccuuGGuGAGGGutst
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34068 hVEGF5) antisense	447
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	340700 VEGF:1366U21 siNA stab09 (hVEGF5) sense VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) stab10	B ACCUCAACCAAAGGCCAGCACTT B 448
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34072 hVEGF5) antisense	449
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34074 VEGF:1366U21 siNA inv stab00 (hVEGF5) sense	CACGACCGGAACCAUCUCCATT 450
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34076 VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) inv stab00 (hVEGF5) antisense	UGGAGUGGUUCGGUJCGUGTT 451
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34078 VEGF:1366U21 siNA inv stab07 (hVEGF5) sense	B cAcGAccGGAAccAcuccATT B 452
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34080 VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) inv stab08 (hVEGF5) antisense	uGGAGUGGUucGGGGuGutst 453
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34082 VEGF:1366U21 siNA inv stab09 (hVEGF5) sense	B CACGACCGGAACCAUCUCCATT B 454
1366	AAACCUCACCAAGGCCAGCACAU	410	34084 VEGF:1384L21 siNA (1366C) inv stab10 (hVEGF5) antisense	UGGAGUGGUUCGGUJCGUGTst 455

Fragments of >=10 nt that are homologous in both human VEGF (NM_003376.3) and human VEGFr1 (NM_002019.1)

Gene	Pos	Len	Sequence	SeqID
VEGFr1	18	12	CUCCUCCCCGGC	385
VEGFr1	125	12	GGAGCCGGGAGA	386
VEGFr1	155	12	GGCCGGGGGG	387
VEGFr1	160	10	GCGGGGGCGA	388
VEGFr1	1051	11	UACCCUGAUGA	389
VEGFr1	1803	10	GGCUAGCACC	390
VEGFr1	2841	10	AGAGGGGGCC	391
VEGFr1	3133	12	AGCAGCGAAAGC	392
VEGFr1	3191	11	AGGAAGAGGGAG	393
VEGFr1	3550	10	CCAGGAGUAC	394
VEGFr1	4216	10	CCGCCCCAG	395
VEGFr1	5711	10	UGGGGCCUUG	396
VEGFr1	5811	10	UGGGCCUUG	397
VEGFr1	5938	10	CUUGGGAGA	398
VEGFr1	6236	10	CCUCUUUU	399

Fragments of >=10 nt that are homologous in both human VEGF (NM_003376.3) and human VEGFr2 (NM_002253.1)

Gene	Pos	Len	Sequence	SeqID
VEGFr2	1463	10	AAGUGAGUGA	400
VEGFr2	1689	11	GGAGGAAGAGU	401
VEGFr2	1886	11	ACAAAUGUGAA	402
VEGFr2	1983	10	GCCCACUGAG	403
VEGFr2	2228	10	GCCUUGCUCA	404
VEGFr2	2484	10	GAGGAAGGGAG	405
VEGFr2	3064	10	UUUGGAAACC	406
VEGFr2	3912	11	GGAGGGGGAAAG	407
VEGFr2	4076	10	CGGACAGUGG	408
VEGFr2	5138	10	UCCCCAGGCCUG	409

The 3'-ends of the Upper sequence and the Lower sequence of the siNA construct can include an overhang sequence, for example about 1, 2, 3, or 4 nucleotides in length, wherein the overhanging sequence of the lower sequence is optionally complementary to a portion of the target sequence. The overhang can comprise the general structure B, BNN, NN, BNsN, or NsN, where B stands for any terminal cap moiety, N stands for any nucleotide (e.g., thymidine) and s stands for phosphorothioate or other internucleotide linkage as described herein (e.g. internucleotide linkage having Formula I). The upper sequence is also referred to as the sense strand, whereas the lower sequence is also referred to as the antisense strand. The upper and lower sequences in the Table can further comprise a chemical modification having Formulae I-VII or any combination thereof (see for example chemical modifications as shown in Table V herein).

Uppercase = ribonucleotide	<u>G</u> = 2'-O-methyl Guanosine	R= 5-bromo-deoxy-uridine
u,c = 2'-deoxy-2'-fluoro U,C	X= nitroindole universal base	Z = sbL: symmetrical bifunctional linker
T= thymidine	Z= nitropyrole universal base	H = chol2: capped Cholesterol TEG
B = inverted deoxy abasic	Y= 3',3' -inverted thymidine	
s = phosphorothioate linkage	M= glyceryl	
A = deoxy Adenosine	N= 3'-O-methyl uridine	
G = deoxy Guanosine	P= L-thymidine	
<u>A</u> = 2'-O-methyl Adenosine	Q= L-uridine	

Table IV

Non-limiting examples of Stabilization Chemistries for chemically modified siNA constructs

Chemistry	pyrimidine	Purine	cap	p=S	Strand
“Stab 00”	Ribo	Ribo	TT at 3'-ends		S/AS
“Stab 1”	Ribo	Ribo	-	5 at 5'-end 1 at 3'-end	S/AS
“Stab 2”	Ribo	Ribo	-	All linkages	Usually AS
“Stab 3”	2'-fluoro	Ribo	-	4 at 5'-end 4 at 3'-end	Usually S
“Stab 4”	2'-fluoro	Ribo	5' and 3'-ends	-	Usually S
“Stab 5”	2'-fluoro	Ribo	-	1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 6”	2'-O-Methyl	Ribo	5' and 3'-ends	-	Usually S
“Stab 7”	2'-fluoro	2'-deoxy	5' and 3'-ends	-	Usually S
“Stab 8”	2'-fluoro	2'-O-Methyl	-	1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 9”	Ribo	Ribo	5' and 3'-ends	-	Usually S
“Stab 10”	Ribo	Ribo	-	1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 11”	2'-fluoro	2'-deoxy	-	1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 12”	2'-fluoro	LNA	5' and 3'-ends		Usually S
“Stab 13”	2'-fluoro	LNA		1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 14”	2'-fluoro	2'-deoxy		2 at 5'-end 1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 15”	2'-deoxy	2'-deoxy		2 at 5'-end 1 at 3'-end	Usually AS
“Stab 16”	Ribo	2'-O-Methyl	5' and 3'-ends		Usually S
“Stab 17”	2'-O-Methyl	2'-O-Methyl	5' and 3'-ends		Usually S
“Stab 18”	2'-fluoro	2'-O-Methyl	5' and 3'-ends	1 at 3'-end	Usually S
“Stab 19”	2'-fluoro	2'-O-Methyl	3'-end		Usually AS
“Stab 20”	2'-fluoro	2'-deoxy	3'-end		Usually AS
“Stab 21”	2'-fluoro	Ribo	3'-end		Usually AS
“Stab 22”	Ribo	Ribo	3'-end -		Usually AS

CAP = any terminal cap, see for example **Figure 10**.

All Stab 1-22 chemistries can comprise 3'-terminal thymidine (TT) residues

All Stab 1-22 chemistries typically comprise about 21 nucleotides, but can vary as described herein.

S = sense strand

AS = antisense strand

Table V

A. 2.5 µmol Synthesis Cycle ABI 394 Instrument

Reagent	Equivalents	Amount	Wait Time* DNA	Wait Time* 2'-O-methyl	Wait Time*RNA
Phosphoramidites	6.5	163 µL	45 sec	2.5 min	7.5 min
S-Ethyl Tetrazole	23.8	238 µL	45 sec	2.5 min	7.5 min
Acetic Anhydride	100	233 µL	5 sec	5 sec	5 sec
N-Methyl Imidazole	186	233 µL	5 sec	5 sec	5 sec
TCA	176	2.3 mL	21 sec	21 sec	21 sec
Iodine	11.2	1.7 mL	45 sec	45 sec	45 sec
Beaucage	12.9	645 µL	100 sec	300 sec	300 sec
Acetonitrile	NA	6.67 mL	NA	NA	NA

B. 0.2 µmol Synthesis Cycle ABI 394 Instrument

Reagent	Equivalents	Amount	Wait Time* DNA	Wait Time* 2'-O-methyl	Wait Time*RNA
Phosphoramidites	15	31 µL	45 sec	233 sec	465 sec
S-Ethyl Tetrazole	38.7	31 µL	45 sec	233 min	465 sec
Acetic Anhydride	655	124 µL	5 sec	5 sec	5 sec
N-Methyl Imidazole	1245	124 µL	5 sec	5 sec	5 sec
TCA	700	732 µL	10 sec	10 sec	10 sec
Iodine	20.6	244 µL	15 sec	15 sec	15 sec
Beaucage	7.7	232 µL	100 sec	300 sec	300 sec
Acetonitrile	NA	2.64 mL	NA	NA	NA

C. 0.2 µmol Synthesis Cycle 96 well Instrument

Reagent	Equivalents:DNA/ 2'-O-methyl/Ribo	Amount: DNA/2'-O- methyl/Ribo	Wait Time* DNA	Wait Time* 2'-O- methyl	Wait Time* Ribo
Phosphoramidites	22/33/66	40/60/120 µL	60 sec	180 sec	360sec
S-Ethyl Tetrazole	70/105/210	40/60/120 µL	60 sec	180 min	360 sec
Acetic Anhydride	265/265/265	50/50/50 µL	10 sec	10 sec	10 sec
N-Methyl Imidazole	502/502/502	50/50/50 µL	10 sec	10 sec	10 sec
TCA	238/475/475	250/500/500 µL	15 sec	15 sec	15 sec
Iodine	6.8/6.8/6.8	80/80/80 µL	30 sec	30 sec	30 sec
Beaucage	34/51/51	80/120/120	100 sec	200 sec	200 sec
Acetonitrile	NA	1150/1150/1150 µL	NA	NA	NA

5 • Wait time does not include contact time during delivery.

• Tandem synthesis utilizes double coupling of linker molecule